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This issue of the REFORMED REVIEW appears at the close of the seminary's dedicatory year in recognition of our new building. During the year each member of the faculty delivered lectures which together with a historical sketch and pictures of the old buildings and the new building are published in this issue as this significant year comes to its close.

HISTORY OF WESTERN THEOLOGICAL
SEMINARY

Abraham Rynbrandt 1

THE GLORY OF PREACHING

John R. Mulder 7

THE CONFLICT OF FAITH IN HABBAKKUK

George H. Mennenga 19

THE REPENTANCE OF JOB

Lester J. Kuyper 30

LITURGY IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

Richard C. Oudersluys 45

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE ASCENSION
TO REFORMED THEOLOGY

M. Eugene Osterhaven 56

THE REFORMED FAITH AND
AMERICAN CULTURE

Elton M. Eenigenburg 70

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HISTORY OF WESTERN THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

ABRAHAM RYNBRANDT
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In the first graduating class of Hope College in 1866 were seven students — Ale Buursma, Gerrit Dangremont, William Gilmore, Peter Moerdyke, William Moerdyke, John W. Te Winkel and Harm Woltman—who wanted to continue their theological training in the Mid-West for the ministry. Being encouraged by Dr. A. C. Van Raalte

and Dr. Philip Phelps, President of Hope College, they petitioned the General Synod of the Reformed Church in America to take necessary steps to begin theological instruction in Holland. While the New Brunswick Theological Seminary at New Brunswick, N.J., was recognized by all as a splendid institution, yet, distance in those years being a prohibitive factor, the leaders of the church in the Middle West felt the interests of this section of the church could be served better by having theological instruction in the Middle West.

As early as 1847 the report on the State of the Church to General Synod had counseled Synod, "Let an institution of high order for classical and theological instruction, under our patronage as long as necessary and at first under our control also be established in the West." This counsel was realized with the establishment of Hope Preparatory School and Hope College. The young western churches believed in education and subscribed an endowment of \$20,000.00 for Hope College.

The General Synod of 1866 voted, "That the subject of theological education be referred to the Board of Education and the Council of Hope College with instruction that leave be granted these students to pursue their theological studies at Hope College, provided that no measures shall be instituted by which additional expense shall be thrown upon Synod or the Board of Education at this time." With permission being granted theological instruction was given at Hope College that first year by two college professors, The Revs. T. Romeyn Beck and Charles Scott. (To their



honor it must be said that they served as Professors of Theology without remuneration until 1875.) They were assisted by a full time professor in the person of the Rev. Cornelius Crispell, D.D., whom the General Synod appointed as Professor of Didactic and Polemic Theology.

Several men from the western classes of the church were appointed to serve as a Board of Superintendents for the governance of this "Department of Theology." The appointment of the Board found differences of opinion among Board members soon raised. One group believed the college should be expanded into a university with the name "Hope Haven University." Another group took the position that theological instruction should remain separate and independent of the college. General Synod did not approve of expanding the college into a university but it did approve of constituting the Council of Hope College the Board of Superintendents of the Western Theological Seminary and went on to elect two additional professors for the institution. They were Dr. Philip Phelps and Dr. Albertus C. Van Raalte.

Difficulties beset the young theological department in Hope College. The anticipated enrollment was not realized, adequate financial support from the churches was not forthcoming. The situation was further aggravated by the fire of 1871 which almost destroyed the city of Holland. The cup of adversities reached the brim when in 1873 the worst financial panic in the nation's history struck its paralyzing blow. Financial embarrassment became so critical that in 1877 the General Synod directed the College to suspend the teaching in the Theological Department. But during the decade of the Department twenty-nine students in theology had been graduated.

The suspension of theological teaching startled the church, especially in the Mid-West. Dr. S. C. Nettinga, late Professor of Church History, said, "One thing is certain, that it shook the western part of the church, especially the Dutch section of the church, to its foundation." Dr. Albertus Pieters, late Professor of Bible and Missions, who at that time was eight years old, was given the impression by family and friends "that some great disaster had taken place."

During the next six years repeated efforts were made to restore the Theological Department. General Synod took the position that the college itself should be on a firm basis before theological instruction be resumed. In 1883 the Department of Theological Instruction was restored. In 1884 Dr. Nicholas M. Steffens was elected professor on the condition that he should not be installed as Professor of Didactic and Polemic Theology until \$30,000.00 had been raised for the endowment of the chair. Dr. Steffens began instruction in his own home in September of that year and when on December 4 the endowment was fully raised, he was formally

installed. The faculty was increased by the addition of two temporary instructors—Dr. Peter Moerdyke in New Testament Exegesis and Dr. Henry E. Dosker in Ecclesiastical History. Classes were held in the rooms of the Oggel House and the old chapel was used for practise preaching.

In 1885 the seminary was separated entirely from Hope College with its own governing board, faculty and curriculum. The title of the Theological Department of Hope College was changed at the same time to the Western Theological Seminary of the Reformed Church in America. In 1888 the General Synod elected the Rev. John W. Beardslee of Troy, New York, as Professor of Biblical Language and Literature. For the next six years Drs. Steffens and Beardslee carried the teaching responsibility of the entire curriculum. Their eminent qualifications, spiritual and intellectual, enabled them to discharge their responsibilities so well, that the Church continues to reap what they sowed.

The new seminary found in the Rev. James Zwemer a conscientious and efficient fund-raiser. He was untiring in his efforts to place the seminary on a sound financial basis. He traveled in the country from farm to farm and in the city from house to house gathering funds for the seminary. However, Dr. James Zwemer's ability to raise money was only one of his competencies. He was also a teacher. When the Chair of Practical Theology was formed in 1907, General Synod called him to that Chair. He filled it with distinction until ill-health forced his retiring from teaching in 1916. By 1919 Dr. Zwemer was able to report to General Synod that four chairs in the seminary were fully endowed, and that a fifth was well on the way to endowment. Dr. Henry E. Dosker returned to the seminary as full time Professor of Historical Theology in 1894.

The year 1895 brought a significant advance for the seminary. The Peter Semelink family of Vriesland, Michigan, made a gift for the construction of a building housing five lecture rooms and a large chapel. This was rightly called Semelink Hall. For some sixty years it served as the "Sem."

Time brought changes in the faculty. After nine years of service Dr. Henry E. Dosker accepted a chair at the Presbyterian Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky, and was succeeded by Dr. Nicholas M. Steffens, who was persuaded to return to the seminary after eight years in the Presbyterian Seminary at Dubuque, Iowa. From 1895-1904 the Chair of Didactic Theology was occupied by Dr. Egbert Winter. Due to deafness, Dr. Winter was forced to retire in 1904 and was succeeded by Dr. Gerrit H. Dubbink. He was eminently qualified, having a superior grasp of Reformed theology and being gifted with a saintly heart. But deprived of normal health he was called to Higher Service in 1910. In 1912 the General Synod called the Rev. Evert J. Blekkink to be Professor of Systematic

Theology and in 1916 the Board of Superintendents elected Dr. Blekkink to the presidency of the seminary, both of which offices he filled with signal success until his retirement in 1928.

The Chair of Historical Theology was filled by Dr. Matthew Kolyn from 1910 to the time of his death in 1918. Dr. Kolyn was succeeded by the Rev. Siebe C. Nettinga. In 1930 Dr. Nettinga was also asked to become the president of the seminary. Dr. Nettinga's invaluable contribution to the seminary as professor and president ended with his lamented death in 1938. Then Dr. William Goulooze was elected to the chair, which he filled with zeal and diligence until 1952 when he was transferred to the newly established Chair of Pastoral Theology and Christian Education. Already under failing health Dr. Goulooze died in 1955. Since 1952 Dr. Elton M. Eenigenburg has been Professor of Historical Theology.

After twenty-five years of outstanding teaching in the Chair of Biblical Language and Literature, Dr. John W. Beardslee, Sr., due to reasons of age and ill-health, retired in 1913 and was succeeded by his son, Dr. John W. Beardslee, Jr., who became professor in the newly formed Chair of New Testament Languages and Literature. After four short years of professorship at Western, Dr. Beardslee, Jr., accepted a call to the Chair of New Testament at New Brunswick Seminary. As a successor to Dr. Beardslee, Sr., the Synod called Dr. Henry Hospers in 1917 to the Chair of Old Testament Language and Literature. For twenty years he taught the Old Testament in a kindly way and with theological flavor until his death in 1937. Two years later Dr. Lester J. Kuyper was invited to teach in the Chair of Old Testament Language and Literature.

When Dr. Beardslee, Jr., went to New Brunswick Seminary, the Board of Superintendents cast about for a successor and in 1920 found one in Dr. Jacob Vander Meulen. For twenty-two years until his retirement Dr. Vander Meulen taught the New Testament, during the last four years of which he also served as president of the Seminary. As professor and president his sincerity and conscientiousness brought him the esteem of students and colleagues alike. In 1942 Dr. Richard C. Oudersluys accepted the invitation to teach in the Chair of New Testament Language and Literature.

Upon the retirement of Dr. James F. Zwemer from the Chair of Practical Theology in 1916, Dr. John E. Kuizenga was called to be his successor. For twelve years he taught in that chair and upon the retirement of Dr. Blekkink, Dr. Kuizenga was transferred to systematic theology. His ability as a scholar, his competency as a teacher were known to other seminaries. After repeated approaches from other schools he accepted a position at Princeton Seminary in 1930.

In 1928 Dr. John R. Mulder was called to the Chair of Practical Theology. In the next eight years his ability as a homiletician was es-

tailed. When Dr. Mulder was transferred to the Chair of Systematic Theology in 1936, Dr. Simon Blocker was invited to succeed him. For sixteen years, until his retirement in 1952, Dr. Blocker brought to the Chair of Practical Theology his gifts of evangelical fervor and pastoral experience.

The Chair of English Bible and Missions was established in 1926 through the generosity of Cornelius E. Dosker and Frank N. Hulswit. Dr. Albertus Pieters, who had been a missionary in Japan some thirty years, was called to the new chair. For thirteen years his remarkable gifts of scholarship and consecration inspired the students. Upon his retirement in 1939, Dr. George H. Mennenga was called to that chair. Along with his teaching duties Dr. Mennenga also fills the office of Dean.

The Chair of Systematic Theology has always held a unique and important position at Western Seminary. When Dr. Kuizenga left for Princeton, Dr. Winfield Burggraaff occupied it for three years. Then Dr John R. Mulder was transferred to it and for sixteen years capably filled it. In 1952 when the new Chair of Preaching was established, Dr. Mulder was transferred to it. Since that time Dr. M. Eugene Osterhaven has been the Professor of Systematic Theology. Since 1942, Dr. John R. Mulder has also served as President of the Seminary.

The history of Western Seminary also records growth and changes in the building program. In 1895 when Semelink Hall was built there was no library. Hope College had provided most of the books and necessary facilities. Then a small library was begun in Semelink Hall, in what later became Nettinga Memorial Chapel. By 1900, 6000 volumes were acquired. Through a gift of the Beardslee family in 1912, the Beardslee Library was built. By that time the library had increased to 10,000 volumes. Prior to 1945 the library was in charge of various professors, particularly Dr. Blekkink and Dr. Pieters. The first full time librarian came in that year in the person of Miss Margaret Van Raden. Since 1950 Miss Mildred Schuppert has been the librarian. About 500 new books are acquired each year. At present there are more than 25,000 volumes.

1912 also brought the construction of a dormitory, known as Zwemer Hall, with a capacity for some 50 students. With the increasing enrollment it was necessary in 1928 to enlarge the dormitory to accommodate 80 students. With such an enrollment the other facilities of the seminary were overtaxed and outgrown. A building program became imperative. After much prayer and planning by the Administration and the Board of Trustees, decision was made at the annual meeting in May, 1950 to begin a building program. This was endorsed by the General Synod. The financial needs of the new building program were laid before the churches of the Chicago, Michigan and Iowa Particular Synods. Within two years the

larger part of the \$750,000 program was either paid or pledged. Construction began in the early spring of 1954. In 1955, the new seminary structure, with its beautiful colonial design and appointments, was dedicated debt-free. The church gratefully exclaimed, "The Lord hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad" (Psalm 126:3). To Jesus Christ, the Head of the Church, belongs the glory and the praise.

Then the Administration and Board of Trustees turned toward the remodelling of Zwemer Hall, which was part of the original plan to build upon the present site. This has now been completed with an indebtedness of some \$75,000.00. The Board is confident that from the unpaid pledges and sacrificial contributions of the churches this will be liquidated in due time.

The seminary is humble and grateful to the church for her spirit of goodwill, loyalty and sacrifice. While it is impossible to recognize all, yet special mention ought to be made of such donors as the Peter Semelink Family, Dennis Vander Linde, James A. Cornell, the John W. Beardslee family, J. J. Van Wyk, the Pronk Estate in memory of Rev. Seine Bolks, Cornelius E. Dosker, Frank Hulswit, Henry Langeland, Mr. and Mrs. A. Biemolt, Mr. and Mrs. Henry Ten Clay, Miss Lucy Van Zanten.

With an administration and faculty dedicated to the glory and honor of the Lord Jesus Christ, with a conscientious student body of one hundred, with modern and adequate facilities, with a church constituency that enfolds the seminary with her heart strings, Western Seminary presses on "toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

THE GLORY OF PREACHING

JOHN R. MULDER

Were I to announce a text for this occasion it would be the statement from II Corinthians 5, "We are ambassadors for Christ; we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." The marvel of the first manifestation of divine grace came by way of an incarnation; the glory of all continuing declaration is by way of representative ambas-

sadors. Ambassadors are persons who have themselves been called to the court they are to represent, and who have so thoroughly and completely absorbed the thinking, the attitudes, and the commitments of their government that they can be entrusted to interpret its positions adequately and accurately. No one can grace this work except he, too, be sent, sent by him at whose court we learned the message we are to convey, and where we caught the spirit which can make us ambassadors. We are in every application of the idea "servants of the Word."

This, of course, is an inevitable succession. In the Old Testament all the prophets prefaced their utterances with the affirmation, "Thus saith the Lord." They realized themselves to be intimately and personally related to God as spokesman of ideas and communications which needed human mouths for expression. God the infinite needed them to transmit his regal divine thoughts and will into human forms. At the end of that long O.T. succession God did something unique in the annals of history for we are told, in John's Prologue to his Gospel, that "in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." Then we are told that "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth." To give his communication full and adequate expression God created a body and a mind in which to incarnate deity, so that God could walk among men, and tell them the full counsel of his grace.

That, undoubtedly, is the interpretation we must give to the fairly unique passage with which John opens his Gospel. The author seems to have been willing to use a common philosophical Greek word and idea.



The justification for John's use of it was not because he sought to present a philosophy of religion, but rather because he was willing to use a philosophical idea, commonly understood, and let it clothe a definitely religious concept. The orbit of human thought had always included two poles—the human and the divine, the created and the uncreated. That is why philosophy speaks of man as incurably religious. Much of human thought, outside of the specially revealed word, has been spent on the effort to relate the uncreated and the created together into some explanatory system. For this Logos explanation we must look to the Greeks and their strongly speculative processes.

Certainly Plato used the idea. But, if one digs farther back into the history of philosophy among the Greeks, he will discover that Heraclitus was the first to use the word. Heraclitus was firmly convinced that the universe is in a state of constant change. He said, "You cannot step twice into the same river, for other and yet other waters are ever flowing on." The mobility of the universe compelled him to choose as his first philosophical principle the idea of fire. Because it never seemed to come to rest in any fixed form he considered fire to be the vital principle of all organisms. We should call that the soul. But, though fire is constantly changing, Heraclitus did believe there was another force which made it possible for man to know his world and to find some consistency about it because, beneath all this changing panorama, there is something that saves it from chaos, and enables us to know; it is the reason in things, which he calls "Logos." That seems to be the first appearance of this word in Greek literature, and its usage here suggests a metaphysical meaning, which is at least in the area into which the Apostle John takes us with that same word when he uses it in his Gospel.

All students of Greek literature and philosophy know that Heraclitus introduced a concept into the thought-world which Greeks of succeeding generations explored. Plato worked at it, and, because of his strong contention that the ultimate realities lie in the world of ideas, of which the seen world is but a counterpart and reflection, he taught that the word "Logos" should be applied to the "archetypes" which were the realities that lay behind the seen. We all recall the illustration used to present Plato's thought. We here in our world see the shadows cast against the wall as the real things pass between the Light beyond them and us who have our backs turned upon them. The real things are the Ideas, says Plato, and we see only the shadows of those realities. Among these Ideas there are order and unity, and of course, goodness, for without that moral quality there would be nothing at all. Plato speaks of this moral cosmic purpose as the Logos. So we may summarize Plato by saying that there are, in his philosophy, two principles—mind and matter. Of these two, mind is the true reality, while matter is that dull, irrational force which becomes

the unwilling slave of mind. Mind, that which is the source of all existence, and to which everything owes its essence, its existence, and its form, is the ultimate and necessary reality, which only can explain what is. It does not seem that Plato would have identified Logos with God, but he was nevertheless so closely identified with conceptions of deity that it is possible and right to say that Plato's Logos was eternal, with God, and "in the very beginning" of everything. The idea is in no sense Christian in Plato, but it did have some of the aspects given to the idea in the literature of Christianity.

Thilly, in his *History of Philosophy*, makes it clear that the Logos idea also found its place in the philosophy of the Stoicks. But among the Stoicks the Logos idea is changed. For them Logos is the universal reason, the soul of the universe. It is related to the matter of the world as the human soul is related to the body. It pervades the whole world just as the human soul is everywhere present in the body. This universal reason fashions the matter of the world according to its thoughts. It is not that matter, but Logos does express itself through the existent material forms. In fact, the relationship is so close that a Stoic, if pressed, would say that Logos and things are both corporeal, but things are more corporeal. The Logos is spiritual substance which pervades every particle of matter. Or again, the Logos is the force without which matter cannot exist. Matter is always, everywhere, permeated by force. That force is spiritual substance. This is a more materialistic conception of Logos than the one Plato advocated. It shows, therefore, how in the philosophical struggle to acknowledge reality, the human mind swung, rather inevitably, toward either pole of explanation—the spiritual, or the material. But, of course, there exactly lies the limitation of philosophy. Philosophy hates a dualism—in the instance of Stoicism it hates the dualism so much as to be willing to teach that God is matter, very attenuated and fluid, of course, but still matter. The first emanation from God is Logos, therefore he was "in the beginning" and was "with God," and, because it was the first of all created creatures, it was next to God.

Now, let us leave Greek thought, and move, for a few moments, over to the Jewish people and their religion. Before 586 B.C. we may think of the Jews as rather well isolated from the other peoples of the world. God had so ordained to preserve to the later centuries the monotheistic revelation he had given to them. So long as they remained the residents of their own appointed country, polytheism only filtered into Jewish life, as they allowed themselves to be influenced by the cultures of people near to them. The false religion which influenced them most, and most disastrously, was Baal worship, a naturalistic, materialistic worship which was nearly the exact opposite of the religious concepts God had communicated to them. Obviously, after 586 B.C., the year of their captivity, many Jews were

willing to surrender their particular and peculiar faith, and to capitulate to the religious teachings of the people among whom they lived. That had certainly happened to the citizens of the Northern Kingdom. Their deportation had resulted quickly in a total loss of religious, not to say national, identity. In Alexandria, Egypt, Hellenic and Near Eastern civilizations met under the patronage of Ptolemy the Second, who established the famous library and brought to the city leaders in every area of human endeavor. One of the first Jewish responses to this environment was a commentary on the Pentateuch, in which the author tried to show that there is harmony between the Old Testament literature and the Greek philosophers. He actually asserted that the Greeks had drawn upon the Jewish literature for their knowledge. Besides, we know, of course, that there are traces of Greek thinking in certain of the Apocryphal books. It need not occasion much surprise if we assert that these tendencies to synthesize came to their culmination in Philo, the Alexandrian Jew.

For Philo also refers to the Logos idea. He taught that the Jewish God is too exalted to come into contact with impure matter. God did, however, act upon the world through intermediaries, the chief of which is the Logos. For him the Logos contained all ideas, it was the power of all powers, the highest of the angels, the first-born Son of God, the God-man, the heavenly Adam. The Logos was closely akin to God, but also immanent in the world of things; he is the wisdom, power, and goodness of God clothed in substance. He is at once eternal and immanent. "Without him was nothing made that hath been made." In fact, Philo's Logos is the world-soul of the Stoic, plus the Platonic world of ideas, made into an intermediate between God and the world. It remains a real question whether Philo would attribute to his Logos the qualities and powers of personality. It is apparent, however, that some Jews, at least, had learned to think as did the Greeks, and had tried to adjust and adapt their Old Testament literature to the patterns of non-Jewish thought.

At any rate, if this background is at all correct, it will be apparent that John the evangelist was not using a completely foreign idea when he based his prologue upon the idea of Logos. The people to whom he wrote his Gospel were familiar with the term, even though they may have been without complete knowledge of the meaning of the term. It was, however, easy for them to lay this idea beside a common characteristic Old Testament idea. How frequently it is written in the Old Testament literature that "The Word of the Lord" came to such and such a prophet. How did God call Abraham? With what voice did God call Moses at the burning bush? Or, to get ourselves right back to the very beginning of all things, just what was it that happened when the Scripture said, "And God said, Let there be light?" What was that voice, and how did it speak? Earth-shaking events followed upon the Word of God, but we are ourselves com-

pletely at a loss to know how to explain or describe either the manner or the possibility of the occurrence. God spoke, and the word did not return to him void. It accomplished what it was supposed to do, and it prospered in that for which God sent it. The Word of God needed only to be sent out; it had its own power. Where the Word came to a prophet, it used him. It seized him, and used him to declare itself. And when a man so seized began to speak, he would say, "Hear ye the Word of the Lord." In very truth "the Word was with God and the Word was God!" But how? Clearly, no pagan philosopher would have dared to posit his system upon a bold premise like this. Emanations? Yes, but something so direct as Scripture indicates they would have judged utterly impossible. Did not Paul, writing to the Corinthians, say that Christ was foolishness to the Greeks? Just the fact of him was that; his crucifixion made his story to be utter foolishness. But, however men looked upon him, he is "Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God." So astonishing is the thought that John dedicated the narrative of his Gospel only to prove as conclusively as possible that Christ is actually the Son of God. He states that as his premise in the Prologue when he says, "The Word dwelt among us and we beheld his glory—the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth;" he said it again at the end where he wrote, "These stories are written that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God." Mystery of Mysteries! God, the originator, remains God, but the enormous span that separates has been bridged through him who for our sakes became man. The Logos is not separate from God: The Logos is God. Yet he is also true man. He is divine truth incarnated in human form. He is a human revelation of God! He is the Word that came to the O.T. prophet, now not as some irrepressible and irresistible conviction that must be spoken, but rather as the embodied idea that is more than eager to express itself. It hardly occasions wonder now that the Greek fathers of the Christian Church should have given so much emphasis to the fact of the Incarnation! It was so much more than their philosophies had ever dared even to suggest! Not someone midway between God and man, but God who became man to make God known to men. That is the wonderful message completing O. T. prophecy, and transcending Greek philosophy.

All of this means, quite inevitably, that the Greeks were wrong when they thought of God as only the originating end of a long sequence of causal relationships. The God of Scripture can come much closer to man than that! It also means that man stands in a much more meaningful light in the Scripture than any Greek philosopher ever supposed. Philosophy always thought a monism to be indispensable so that everything can be described in terms of one concept. Because it must be a monism, philosophy seeks always the best and most inclusive idea it can find. It does seem as if the spiritual concepts have been more acceptable in philosophy than the utterly materialistic ones have been. Even so, however, such monisms have

denied the fundamental human values, which receive their due only in the Christian faith. The Bible teaches a dualism—the Creator and his creatures. Of man, one of God's creatures, the Scripture teaches that he was made to be God's image-bearer with whom God came to converse in the cool of the day. To that man God had given all dominion over lower creation, man himself being under the authority of God. The dismal story of man's unwillingness to obey that divine authority is the story of the Scripture—and of human conscience—but the Scripture also indicates that God had not left himself without recourse in the behalf of fallen man. Divine impulses are not only creative and originating, as philosophy teaches; such impulses can also be re-creative and redemptive. That the Scripture makes abundantly clear. Thus the "Word" by whom has been made all that is made assumed a second role—that of Redeemer and Re-creator. For that reason Paul can write as he does to the Colossians, "His dear Son, in whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins, who is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of every creature; for by him were all things created that are in heaven, and that are on the earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things were created by him, and for him, and he is before all things, and by him all things cohere. And, he is the head of the body, the church, who is from the beginning, the first-born from the dead—that in all things he should have the pre-eminence." Man may do wrong, and run contrary to divine purposes, but God can still work causally in his world. Therefore man—man is not merely a creature who takes his place in the sequence of things; he is intimately bound to God, so intimately that when man faces frustration and defeat as a consequence of his transgression of divine authority, God will actually initiate a program of redemption by that same Logos through whom he originally made man and all other creatures. Redemption, reconciliation, salvation in Christ—this is the word of the New Testament which was prefigured through the entire line of prophets whose person and message graced the pages of the Old Testament. The Logos accounts not only for Creation; he also accounts for Re-creation. One hardly dares to state which is the more remarkable. We do not need to because Paul teaches that redemption took place as well as creation, by means of the Logos, so that "in all things Christ should have the pre-eminence."

Now, of that pre-eminent Christ we are to be ambassadors. Of that mighty one whose power was not exhausted by the wonder of creation, but who was ready, in human emergency, also to function as redeemer, we are to be representatives. That is the glory of preaching. That was the glory of the prophets of the Old Testament; that is the glory of the messengers in the New Testament day. It seems as if we may say that the O.T. prophets stood before their people with their backs toward the dawn of the day of which they spoke. They were at best heralds of something that was to





be done in their behalf. The better day still lay behind them, but its glory provided a background for their work and message. The messengers of the New Testament, however, have the glory of what has happened shining into and upon their faces. The light of the mystery of godliness, of the transcendent fact of Bethlehem and Calvary—that light must find itself expressed in our message, in our manner, and in our person. No wonder Paul said, "We pray you, be ye reconciled to God." We are ambassadors of Christ who, though on equality with God, took upon himself the form of a servant, and for our sakes became poor so that we through his poverty could become rich. "Had I a thousand lives to give, Lord, they would all be Thine." Yes, it could take a thousand, and a thousand thousand, to begin to reflect some of that glory. But—we have, each of us, but one! Forty-five years at most is the length of our ambassadorship, and so much of those years is taken up with other and lesser things. Such a wonderful person to present, and we such poor instruments for presentation of him! Such a remarkable event to declare, but always upon a backdrop of little details, and picayune attitudes. Ourselves aware of the glory, but so unable to let it shine out and through our lives. Angels desire to look into it, but we are set to declare it, in the behalf of Christ and in his stead!

I said, a bit ago, that the glory of our work must find itself expressed in our message, in our manner, and in our persons. With your permission I should like to speak briefly on each of these aspects as I bring my paper to its close.

So far as our message is concerned, this burden that lies upon us means that all our preaching must be Christ-centered. This does not mean that the preaching may not be broadly Biblical, for it should, but it does mean that preaching that is really Christian must be more than merely theistic. The Old Testament word is true, but partial. It needs the New Testament revelation for full understanding, and true application. The Old Testament Jew was a monotheist, a position very much better than the polytheism of the Greeks, but inadequate over against the fuller and better revelation of the New Testament. In our own day, as always, there have been those who are ready to accede to the theistic view of life, but such a view omits the redemption aspects of God's activity. Christian preaching carries dominant notes on salvation, and its glorious possibility. Of Spurgeon it is said that, no matter where in Scripture he found his text, he hastened from there to Christ. I personally find that statement to be very much of a relative statement. Spurgeon took many texts from the Old Testament, and preached sermons on those texts as the passages themselves required, showing how God worked effectively upon the Old Testament level, but he never concluded such a sermon without at least alluding to the new and better way. That made his preaching always Christian, and brought the

glory of God's redemptive act in the incarnation and resurrection of Christ to set the Old Testament divine act in a brighter and truer light.

All I am trying to say is that Christian preaching does not always require that it be based on N.T. passages; it means rather that we recognize and admit that Christian preaching asks of us always to let the full light of the Gospel shine upon and through every passage we discuss. Christian messages must be trinitarian, and must declare the story of God's justifying grace by faith in Jesus Christ, his Son, our Lord. That type of procedure creates no antithesis between the two testaments, but rather manifests how the embryo statement of Genesis 3:15 finds its fulfillment in John 3:16. There can be no wrong in preaching from the O. T., the wrong comes if one preaches from the Old in such manner as to allow the inference that there is no New Testament. Then we should have only hope, but hope long deferred. The pessimism of Judaism could then well lie upon us, so that there could be ground for selling out for deadly ceremonialism, or for a rationalism which makes a religion out of its morality. Such a position would also lend color to the cyclical view of history, as advocated in so many circles. Christianity, on the other hand, believes that history moves forward, it may be with undulations, but its movement records progress "toward the great far-off divine event."

How can we be sure of that divine event? The answer is very simple —because we believe that Christ Jesus has come into human affairs once. History becomes the basis for judgment upon and counsel to the generation we address. We may urge them to accept the offer of salvation, because Christ has come. We may speak of the spiritual danger of neglect because dis-belief in Jesus Christ is sin. We may and must speak of judgment because the prince of this world was judged in the victorious resurrection of the Lord Jesus. But, while all these truths are perfectly valid, the message we preachers must proclaim is the loving and lovely message that God wants men to turn from reliance upon the weak and beggarly elements of time and to accept the divine offer of salvation in Jesus Christ. As Paul said, "We pray you, in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." That message needs to be proclaimed to every generation because each generation faces the problem of sin, and every generation needs salvation. Never may we ambassadors allow ourselves to become so adjusted to the immorality of the generations, and to the sin that so easily besets us, as to let the message of God in Christ become anything less than the message of divine salvation. Dr. John Van Ess used to say that one of the problems of a missionary to Arabia was that he could, after a time, adjust himself to the situation so that it no longer disturbed him. Never may that be true of anyone who would remain a true ambassador for Jesus Christ, the Lord. In that sense we must remain N.T. preachers.

Now permit me to speak a bit about our manners as we discharge the

duties of our ambassadorship. At this point I can find nothing better with which to describe my thought than the incident in the life of Jesus Christ where it is recorded that he and his disciples were going up to Jerusalem. As usual, Jesus went before them, but it is recorded that, "as they followed, they were afraid." That was an unusual phenomenon. They knew Jesus well, they were very close to him. Why were they afraid? The sentences that follow help me to find a clue. Those sentences record the words of Jesus as he explained to his disciples why he was going to Jerusalem. To my mind it was precisely this realization by the disciples that created their fear. He was with them, he lived among them, he knew and loved them, but they also felt that across his spirit swept moods and commitments so far above theirs that they could only be amazed and afraid. The incarnation surely meant that Jesus became a real man, and really shared human nature. The Scripture says truly that he was accounted "sin," but that does not mean that Jesus ever came to the low levels some men seem capable of. Fact is that his being accounted sin was so poignant an experience for our Lord, because his own soul revolted against sin. He loved men, but he did not, could not, always approve what men did. He remained in the eyes of men, the Son of God incarnated in human flesh.

Does it seem unrealistic, academic, pedantic to suggest that such an ideal should always be before our own minds as we seek to body forth the glory of preaching? The flagrant sins of society can never have a place in our lives unless we are ready to have a word placed above the doorway of our lives—Ichabod, the glory hath departed. The foibles of human nature we cannot too well afford to accept or condone lest we find ourselves ultimately enmeshed in these very same foibles, thus disqualifying ourselves to hear those rich overtones of the grace and knowledge of God that can make us real ministers of his transforming grace. The little colloquialisms of speech, dress, and deportment—even these little details we must scrutinize very carefully lest, by accepting them, we lose our identity. In the Old Testament there were people who were betrayed by their speech, and some of the words we accept can betray us. We are not here in our generation to be conformists; we are to make the members of our generation aware of our real Homeland.

In Washington, D.C., there are many embassies. These embassies are the headquarters and the residences of representatives of foreign countries. Their building is on American soil, it stands within the corporate limits of our nation's capital, it shares in most instances our American style of architecture. Its place, its appearance, everything about it looks exactly like what is ours. But—it is foreign. Its allegiance is not to our country. The objectives it seeks are not like ours. It is among us to do something that may be advantageous to its own government. So, it must also be for each of us who would be a true ambassador of Jesus Christ.

"I am a stranger here within a foreign land,
My home is far away upon a golden strand;
Ambassador to be of realms beyond the sea,
I'm here on business for my King!"

If these things be so relative to our message and our manners, it does not seem necessary to be long on the subject of our persons. In his epistle to the Romans Paul urges fellow believers not to be "conformed to this world, but to be transformed by the renewing of the mind." Peter speaks about "sanctifying the Lord in one's heart." Jesus lets one of his beatitudes say, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." Paul says that "with the heart man believes to righteousness." In Proverbs it is written, "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." All this, translated into a sentence that can be meaningful for our purposes, means that if we keep steadily before our minds the fact that we are ambassadors of Christ it will ultimately come to pass that we shall be just that. Not in a merely formal sense described by ordination, but in that more effective and more truly descriptive sense of really having been transformed by the progressive renewing of our minds. It must come to pass in all of us that our formal appointment is supplemented by a personal absorption of the ideas, the spirit, and the commitment of the Lord Jesus himself. We must learn not only to think his thoughts after him; we must learn to think as he would think in our situation. And such thinking must not come by some ambassadorial compulsion; such thinking must be ours because it is our sincere desire to be true representatives of him whose we are. The change does not come from the outside in; it is a change that makes our personalities over so that we love what our Lord loves, and do what our Lord would do in our circumstances. Paul said, "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." So it must also be with each of us, if the glory of preaching is to be seen in our lives.

THE CONFLICT OF FAITH IN HABAKKUK

GEORGE H. MENNENGA

The Old Testament prophet is a product of his own age. He is a voice out of the pattern of history and life of which he is a part. We must hasten to add, however, that his message is not necessarily limited in meaning and application to his own generation. He is a forth-teller; he also is a fore-teller. Habakkuk is no exception.

Habakkuk is called a prophet, yet, at first does not seem to be that. Prophets speak to the people for God whose spokesmen they are. Habakkuk speaks, first of all, to God for Israel.

He is the philosopher among the Hebrews says George L. Robinson.¹ George Adam Smith observes that with Habakkuk begins speculation in thought in Israel.² His age was an age to try the faith of pious souls. Men began to ask themselves and each other questions as to the outcome of a desperate political, ethical, moral and religious situation. Habakkuk went one step farther—he asked God. Out of that questioning comes his book, in structure, more or less, a dialogue between the prophet and God.

Just what was that crisis in history—and—what was the conflict in the experience of Habakkuk? "At home a reign of lawlessness; abroad a power that knows no law"—and, apparently God isn't doing anything about it. Yet—when God assures our prophet that he is doing something about it, that presents an even greater problem out of which comes the message of the book which *portrays a believer's conflict of faith and the ultimate triumph of that faith.*

The first problem that challenges Habakkuk's faith is an *intellectual* conflict. He does not deny the existence of God but he does not understand his failure to interpose in the lawlessness in Judah. "Oh Lord, how long, how long shall I cry and thou wilt not hear." Apparently he has



¹ *The Minor Prophets*, p. 118.

² *The Book of the Twelve*, Vol. II: pp. 133f.

been complaining before about the injustices of his own people, about their moral derelictions and their unethical practices. Why doesn't God do something about the evils of his people.

The prophet receives an answer to his question when God says:

" . . . I am doing a work in your days that you would not believe if told. For lo, I am rousing the Chaldeans, that bitter and hasty nation, who march through the breadth of the earth to seize the habitations not their own."

The sins in Judah will not go on unpunished, justice will be meted out for God has chosen an agent described by God himself as treacherous, terrible and violent "whose own might is their god."

Duhm and Torrey and a few others have maintained that it was not the Chaldeans but Alexander the Great and the Macedonians against whom the prophecy was directed, and therefore the message of the book comes out of the post-exilic period.³ There doesn't seem to be very much ground for this position, which is largely a subjective conclusion. Consequently the majority of students are in agreement that the reference is to the Chaldeans—the empire of Nabopolassar and Nebuchadnezzar. Jeremiah, Habakkuk's contemporary is very explicit in his reference to the Chaldean empire to which the Hebrews will be subjected (Jer. 25:8ff, 32:5, 24, 29).

At this point the *Commentary on Habakkuk* among the Dead Sea Scrolls adds confirmation, explicitly stating that it is the Kasdim who are spoken of and described by the prophet.⁴

Habakkuk knew the Chaldeans. It is highly probable that this dialogue took place after the battle of Carchemish in 605 B.C., in which the Babylonians had proved their superiority to the Egyptians. They had manifested their cruelty and wickedness in the campaigns and ravages of the subject peoples. Must Judah be subjected to a power like that?

This poses a second problem for Habakkuk. If the first was of an intellectual character—here is a *moral* problem. To the prophet it seems utterly inconsistent and incongruous that God should plan anything like that because of his own holiness and purity—and—because the instrument to punish is more wicked than the people who are to be subjected to the chastisement:

"Thou who art of purer eyes than to behold evil
and canst not look on wrong,
Why dost thou look on faithless men,
and art silent when the wicked swallows up
the man more righteous than he?"

³ *An Introduction to the Old Testament*, p. 236; J. Patterson, *Goodly Fellowship of the Prophets*, p. 128.

⁴ *The Dead Sea Scrolls of St. Mark's Monastery*, p. XIX.

What a conflict in the mind and in the heart of God's spokesman!
Dark indeed is the picture.

A much later poet must have experienced a similar crisis. Looking round about him he also saw wickedness and injustice where righteousness ought to be exercised. So, wrote James Russell Lowell:

"Truth forever on the scaffold
Wrong forever on the throne"

So it is, that in the first chapter of this book is presented a picture of disappointment, of discouragement, doubt and despair. Dark and hopeless indeed is the outlook for the prophet and for the people, of which he was a part.

Turning to the third chapter we observe an entirely different attitude. Instead of doubt there is certainty; troubled interrogation is displaced by positive affirmation; instead of despair there is hope; disappointment has been displaced by joy.

It is well to consider the critical problem involved in the pattern of the book. Some biblical scholars have maintained that the poem of praise in chapter three, this beautiful prayer poem, this theophany can hardly be ascribed to the same author as that of the first two chapters. The first to insist upon a post-exilic date for this chapter was Bernhard Stade who has had a considerable following among the critics.

Several arguments are advanced for this position. The style itself is different from the known or, at least, ascribed writing to Habakkuk. However, the author manifests himself as a real poet in chapters one and two as well as in chapter three. Some scholars observe strong affinities in this chapter with Psalms of a later, that is, post-exilic date. The argument from language and style, by itself, is not at all conclusive.⁵

The temper expressed in chapter three is quite different from that in the previous chapters. In the light of the prophet's experience, this may not present an insuperable problem.

Whereas in the first part of the book there is an obvious historical pattern out of which Habakkuk speaks—no such historical situation is evident in chapter three. There is a great deal of truth in this observation. However, chapter three can be related to the prophet's experience in the light of the pattern of history and his resultant encounter with God.

A very significant argument supporting the position that Habakkuk is not the writer of chapter three is the fact that the *Commentary on Habakkuk* among the *Dead Sea Scrolls* stops with the second chapter the twentieth verse. This is a significant but not necessarily a devastating argument

⁵ See George Adam Smith, *Book of the Twelve*, pp. 128f.

against the unity of authorship position. All the Dead Sea Scrolls, up to this point of time, have not been studied and analyzed. It is altogether possible that there are yet unrecovered scrolls. Further recovery and interpretation may throw more light on Habakkuk.

Then again, the message of the book remains the same whether the prophet concluded it at 2:20 adding much later chapter 3 himself or whether it was added by someone else. If another added the hymn of praise it was no doubt because of his encounter with God.

Then too, the Lord Jesus Christ and his apostles put the stamp of approval and authority upon the Old Testament as they had it and knew it, and what they had we have in the canon now. This is not saying that Jesus claimed Habakkuk as author of the whole book, but it does indicate the integrity and the canonicity of this prophetic writing.

Through the years there have been scholars, such as Duham,⁶ Sellin and others, though on different grounds, who have maintained that the song forms a vital part of the entire book of Habakkuk. My own impression and conviction is, that the message would be incomplete without the third chapter. It does form a fine unit. There is evident a beautiful progressive movement—from darkness to light, from doubt to certainty, from despair to joy, from questioning to faith. Listen to what the prophet says—

"Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labor of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: Yet will I rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation. The Lord God is my strength, and he will make my feet like hinds' feet, and he will make me to walk upon mine high places. To the chief singer on my stringed instruments" (3:17-19).

What a glorious affirmation! What a remarkable change! What a marvelous consummation of experience! What has happened? We need to go back to the second chapter for the answer. The answer forms the very core, the very theme about which the whole movement of the book revolves—it is that glorious word in 2:4. This stands in striking contrast to the first part of the 4th verse of the chapter.

"Behold he whose soul is not upright in him, (who is puffed up) shall fail."

"Woe to him who heaps up what is not his own" (v. 6)

The second chapter from the 5th verse on is an expansion of this word and refers, by synecdoche to the Chaldeans. It describes their impermanence, their futility and failure. Note just a few of the woes and condemnations pronounced against the "puffed up" Chaldeans. Their insatiable thirst for conquest will be repaid inasmuch as they themselves will be conquered one day.

⁶ Das Buch Habakkuk (1906).

"Woe to him who gets evil gain for his house, to set his nest on high . . ." (v. 9)

The greedy Chaldeans who are attempting to build an empire on a false security must inevitably fall.

"Woe to him who builds a town on blood, and founds a city on iniquity . . ." (v. 12)

Cruel Chaldeans will build only for a time—such a building is doomed to destruction. The triumph of the Kingdom of God, and that alone, is sure and permanent. The world conqueror is not Nebuchadnezzar but Jehovah of hosts.

"Woe to him who makes his neighbors drink of the cup of his wrath and makes them drunk, to gaze on their shame!"

The Chaldeans will be punished in kind—they will be compelled to drink the bitter cup of contemptuous cruelty they had held to the lips of others.

"Woe to him who says to a wooden thing awake; to a dumb stone arise! Can this give revelation? . . . There is no breath at all in it."

Their idolatry is the real explanation of the immortality and cruelty of the Chaldeans. They worshipped gods, idols, gorgeous indeed, but stupid, impotent, dumb, lifeless.

That characterizes the Chaldeans:—they shall not live—they shall be destroyed.

That, at the moment however, does not seem likely to Habakkuk—and God knows it doesn't. "Though it tarry" says God, "if it seem slow, wait for it." Be patient, it will surely come.

"Though the mills of God grind slowly,
Yet they grind exceeding small:
Tho with patience He stands waiting
With exactness He grinds all."⁷

The life of the unrighteous is a life of futility and impermanence. That description of the ultimate destruction of the Chaldeans and of God's retributive righteousness should help resolve Habakkuk's conflict of faith. This is however, in a measure negative, and God takes care of that:

"But the righteous shall live by his faith."

What a pithy flash of prophetic promise! Where and how did the prophet get that conviction? On that watch tower, possibly through prophetic ecstasy, through an inner revelation in the words of Woelfkin "sitting and brooding under the eaves of eternity." The prophet received his message from God: "The righteous, the just, shall live by faith." It came to him through a personal encounter with the Divine.

Remember what Lowell said:

"Truth forever on the scaffold
Wrong forever on the throne."

⁷ Longfellow: *Retribution.*

He said more—he added to that stanza, the following verses:

"Yet the scaffold sways the future,
and behind the dim unknown
Standeth God within the shadow
Keeping watch above his own."⁸

The most significant use of the text is that by the Apostle Paul. He makes it the cornerstone of his doctrine of *Justification by Faith*.

"... the righteousness of God is revealed through
faith for faith; as it is written, "He who through faith
is righteous shall live." Romans 1:17

"Now it is evident that no man is justified before
God by the law; for 'He who through faith is righteous
shall live.' Galatians 3:11

In this Paul has been accused of reading too much into Habakkuk's prophetic utterance; that he laid hold on the text for his own purposes of building his own favorite doctrine of *Justification*.

How well we know that Paul was followed by St. Augustine, by Martin Luther, by John Calvin and others—the great reformers of the 16th Century using the text as a basic fundamental principle for the Protestant Reformation.

If we believe in a complete revelation, a progressive revelation by divine inspiration, there is no difficulty in thinking of Paul as coming to this conviction by encounter with the Divine, even as did Habakkuk.

In part, the criticism has revolved about the terms "faith" and "faithfulness." Does Habakkuk say "The righteous shall live by his faith" or does he say "The righteous shall by his faithfulness"? In the body of the text of the Scriptures, including the R.S.V., Habakkuk is saying "The righteous shall live by his faith"—and the marginal or footnote reading is given as "The righteous shall live by his faithfulness." The term in Habakkuk is *Emunah*—"faithfulness," "firmness" which is an abstract noun from the verbal root *Aman*—"to believe," "to be faithful," to be "trustworthy." The term is applied to the arms of Moses held up by Aaron and Hur in the battle with Amalek;⁹ it is used to point to fidelity between husband and wife.¹⁰

Faithfulness refers primarily to *conduct*; faith has reference to an attitude of *trust, confidence*. The two words in their root meaning run into one another. To have faith makes one faithful. And yet, there is a difference. A man may "pledge his faith," or, he may "break his faith." Obviously in these expressions the word refers to "faithfulness"—the lack of it. On the other hand, when someone declares, for instance, that God has

⁸ James Russell Lowell: *The Present Crises*.

⁹ Exodus 17:12.

¹⁰ Hosea 2:22. See Young's *Analytical Concordance* for uses of the term.



Memory Lounge

Student's Room





Old Zwemer Hall before remodelling

Old Semelink Buil



instituted the holy sacraments only for the faithful, the reference is to such who have faith in the sense of implicit trust and confidence in the thing promised and not in the sense of being faithful in conduct.

Since both meanings come legitimately from the same root, the particular meaning must be determined by the context in which it is found. As the word is used in Habakkuk the idea of faithfulness to duty or to promise, does not in the least fit the structure nor the purpose of the prophecy. These demand the meaning of trusting, believing, resting in the Lord and having a confidence in the ultimate righteousness of God's acts. That is the whole thrust, the very core and theme of the book. This being so, Paul not only *may*, Paul *must* interpret Habakkuk as he does. So also the great reformers with their emphasis on Justification by faith and not by works or conduct.

As chapter 2:5 to the end is an expansion of 2:4a, that is, with reference to the Chaldeans, so chapter 3 is an expansion of 2:4b—"the righteous shall live by his faith." I like to think that this beautiful prayer hymn of praise is introduced by contrasting the idols of the Chaldeans with the God of Israel.

"But the Lord is in his holy temple: let all the earth keep silence before him." (2:20)

"Hush!" says Habakkuk, "He is here! He has been active, He is active now, He will continue to be active." "O Lord, revive thy work."

The singer takes a view of the history of God's chosen people. In view of what God has done in the past, the prophet pleads that he do it again. "In the midst of the years, renew it." Somehow let history repeat itself. He points to some of the great events, peaks in history, to certain crises in the experience of God's people where God had been active. Let us look at a few of these experiences.

"In wrath remember mercy" (3:2). Time and again had that been revealed. In the wilderness wanderings, how true it was:

"I saw the tents of Cushan in affliction; the curtains of the land of Midian did tremble" (v. 7).

Nations were driven before Israel, defeated one after another.

"Was thy wrath against the rivers, O Lord? Was thy anger against the rivers, or thy indignation against the sea, when thou didst ride upon thy horses, upon thy chariot of victory?" (v. 8).

Israel passed through the separated waters of the Red Sea and crossed the Jordan—dry shod.

"The sun and moon stood still in their habitation . . ." (v. 11). In the valley of Ajalon—Joshua had said, "Sun, stand thou still."

That was some of the work of the Lord through the years. "In the midst of the years, renew it," prays the prophet. Because he believes that

God will, though he cannot see it now, the prophet bursts forth in great praise to the Lord God.

What about the conflict of faith? One wonders whether the prophet's intellectual problem with which he started was solved completely. One wonders too, whether he found a completely satisfying answer to the riddle which involved a moral conflict. We are sure of this: Habakkuk placed a complete trust and confidence in God's operation in the affairs of men and nations. We have reason to believe that he appropriated that faith for himself of which God spoke to him on the tower of his experience.

All of this has contemporary relevancy: To be sure, we are a part of that theology and tradition of the reformers—back to Paul—justification, —salvation, by faith whereby men have "peace with God." This must be more than mere intellectual assent to a theological proposition and a creedal statement. As a church of the Reformation we have insisted on a well-trained church leadership—and rightly so; we have also insisted on a well-informed, intelligent church membership—and rightly so. Yet, it is imperative that the truth, to have relevance, must be personalized through an encounter with God. There ought to be an insistence *an experience* plus knowledge. The Heidelberg Catechism states it well: "What is true faith?"

Answer: "True faith is not only a true knowledge whereby I hold for truth all that God has revealed to us in his word, but also an assured confidence, which the Holy Ghost works by the gospel in my heart;" (Seventh Lord's Day: Question 21).

More than that,—the message has relevancy for all of life—the whole of life, in every area of experience and particularly in life's great conflicts and crises.

A young mother mourned the passing of her little baby. She could not understand the mystery—"Why? Why? Why?" Not understanding she became bitter—in her bitterness she became defiant—in her defiance she accused God of extreme cruelty. How the young pastor, attempting to shepherd her, wished he could take this young broken-hearted mother and lead her back several months in time to an experience of another, virtually identical, and in the same place. Back to that time when another young mother mourned the going home of her little girl—the only one she had. When all the others had passed by the little white casket, the family came also, and the mother last of all. With moisture in her eyes, with quivering and loving hands she took the little white blanket to "tuck in" her little one. Through her tears there shone a smile of hope, trust, confidence—a sort of reflection of the poet's words:

Behind a frowning providence
There shines a smiling face.

What made the difference? The one was religious, she knew God, had occasional contact with Him—but—God had been for her a crutch at times, and, in case of crises, a sort of last resort,—but, she had not counted on this one. The other? She lived by faith—consistently, and constantly. When this crisis and emergency came—she emerged—by faith.

Browning in his *Paracelsus* states it well:

If I stoop
Into a dark tremendous sea of cloud,
It is but for a time; I press God's lamp
close to my breast; its splendor, soon or late
Will pierce the gloom:
I shall emerge one day.

THE REPENTANCE OF JOB

LESTER J. KUYPER

Any discussion of the book of Job must come to grips with the main purpose of the author. One senses rather soon in reading the book that a problem of great magnitude has taken hold of the writer. However, when one is pressed to define that problem, difficulties and uncertainties are at hand. Scholars are not agreed as to the central theme of the book. Some affirm that we are here given an explanation for the apparently undeserved affliction of the godly. Others assert that the problem of theodicy is raised and that the book seeks to "justify the ways of God to man." Still others find something of an interweaving of purposes in that the problem of man's existence is considered in the presence of God as known and revealed through the Old Testament. This results in an interpretation of life through an interpretation of affliction which J. Hempel has aptly given as: *Lebenserklärung ist Leidenserklärung.*¹

Much as these problems are discussed within the book of Job, yet we find no explicit formal statement by our author that he intends to solve one or the other. However, we would expect that the author's basic purpose should come to expression in his conclusion. In this we are not disappointed, for we sense rather soon that there is a conclusion toward which the author is moving. He is like a guide who is conducting us through a magnificent medieval castle. He leads us through many corridors and labyrinths, sometimes in large spacious rooms where we might suppose we shall remain, or he approaches exits that could be the end of our tour, but these are bypassed until finally he opens the one door that leads to a majestic panorama of mountains mirroring their snow-covered peaks in a silver lake. Thus it is in Job. And well may we ask, What is that one door which opens to our author's high experience? This should express



¹ "Das theologische Problem des Hiob" in *Zeitschrift für systematische Theologie*, vol. 6 (1928), p. 621.

his basic purpose. That purpose is declared in one important passage in our book. It is found in chapter 42:5, 6:

I had heard of thee by the hearing of the ear,
But now my eye sees thee;
Therefore I reject my words,
And repent in dust and ashes.

This passage indicates something of past experience and thinking which produced unsatisfactory results for Job, and it further describes a new understanding of God which is of such glorious blessedness that Job abandons all his previous hopes and demands for the unspeakable peace and joy of "now my eye sees thee." This, in brief, is the denouement of the poem by which our author under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit declares how he was delivered from the problems that greatly vexed the minds of God's ancient people.

If these last words of the dialogue with the Lord are Job's final answer to the queries and misgivings that brought him to the brink of despair, then we should spare no diligence to grasp their full meaning. Our task is a difficult one. The context offers little help. The passage is brief, concise, freighted with intensity of feeling and overflowing with an ecstasy such as St. Paul learned of a man caught up into the third heaven who heard unspeakable words (II Cor. 12:2-4). So it is here. However, let us not glory in our difficulties but rather in our opportunity to examine and comprehend something of this author's profound insight which shall surely be beneficial to our faith and to our ministry.

I propose to pursue this study as follows: In the language of these words we ought to learn what is meant by "the hearing of the ear," for this is put in contrast to the new understanding which Job has reached. Our second task is to grasp the sense of Job's repentance as it is given in verse 6, "Therefore I reject my words and repent in dust and ashes." And finally we want to understand as clearly as we can what Job through the eyes of faith saw as he declares, "but now my eye sees thee."

THE HEARING OF THE EAR

In Old Testament times the chief medium of communication was by way of report through the spoken word. Writing although fully developed and rather extensively used in the keeping of records and preserving of important messages and laws was a poor second to oral tradition by which each generation transmitted to its posterity its history, its laws and customs and its faith. The psalmist says, "We have heard with our ears, O God, our fathers have told us, what deeds thou didst perform in their days, in the days of old" (44:1). "We have heard" therefore is the equivalent of tradition that had become fixed and accepted as the proper understanding of history and the unchallenged articles of faith. This "hearing

of the ear" or tradition is the background of the dialogue portion of the book of Job, which has as its major tenet that God blesses the righteous but sends affliction upon the wicked. Or one may state it differently that prosperity is a mark of God's pleasure and that calamity a proof of God's displeasure and a proof of the wickedness of the sufferer. We shall call this the traditional retribution and reward theology, which, put succinctly, is: The righteous prosper but the wicked are in adversity. This is the background on which the dialogue is projected. It serves as the common basis for the discussion of both the friends and Job. The difference is that the friends are set for the defense of this retribution doctrine, while Job constantly assails it or, to put it more correctly, Job sets the necessity before God to repair this doctrine which has apparently broken down.

Before we set our minds to follow the course of the debate in the dialogue, we ought to pause to look back in the prologue, chapters 1-2. The dialogue may well be encompassed by the descriptive title "The hearing of the ear." The prologue, however, does not come within this "hearing of the ear." Certainly Job knows nothing about the issue that arises between God and Satan, as given in the prologue. Job knows not that he is become the supreme object of careful scrutiny in the moral and spiritual world, for the issue is to show that in mankind, frail and sinful though it may be, there is pure goodness and disinterested piety. The satanic slur is pointedly given in "Does Job fear God for naught?" This is cynicism in its raw and crass form. It pours scorn and contempt on "virtue for virtue's sake" or "piety for God's sake." The moral and spiritual order of God's world cannot exist unless supported by rewards of some kind. The Lord God, however, maintains that Job as God's servant and as a representative of his kingdom can and will put the lie on what Satan alleges to be the truth. The test is allowed, and the beloved of God is placed in the crucible of bitter affliction to demonstrate that a man will serve God for naught. In dramatic succession Job is deprived of all worldly possessions—his wealth flows from him like waters into the desert sand, his family is gone, his health abandons him to the horrors of pain and misery and finally all human affection and personal esteem are lost as his wife mocks him and as he becomes the object of shame and contempt as the once mighty and revered sheik of the East takes his place on the rubbish heap of the community. What will a man do or say when he is dropped to such low levels? Will he curse God and die? We strain our ear together with all the spirits of heaven and hell to catch what words will cross Job's lips. Our author gives us his words. After the first volley of afflictions Job arose and rent his robe and shaved his head and fell on the ground and worshipped, and he said, "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return; The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord" (1:20, 21).

Again Job speaks after being afflicted with loathsome sores from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head and after his wife urged him to curse God and die. "You speak as one of the foolish women would speak. Shall we receive good at the hand of God and shall we not receive evil?" (2:10). And then the author gives his comments lest the reader miss the point of this part of the story. "In all this Job did not sin or charge God with wrong . . . In all this Job did not sin with his lips." (1:22; 2:10).

This is the prologue with its objective realized: the godly do serve God for naught, rewards are not essential for virtue and piety. This teaching of the prologue is, as we noted above, not a part of the tradition, the "hearing of the ear," which is the background of the dialogue. Job nor his friends are made aware of the behind-the-scene encounter, and the author does not introduce anything of the contest of the prologue into the debate. Yet the prologue does serve to set the stage in informing us of the affliction of our hero and the coming of his friends.

We are now obliged to follow the course of debate in the dialogue and we shall observe that our author presses into every nook and corner of traditional theology for a solution to this baffling problem of the apparent undeserved suffering of the godly. Job opens the dialogue with a bitter lament in which he curses the day of his birth. It were better not to have been born than to endure the agonies that have come upon him. The three friends and finally Elihu make their defense for the traditional position that God knows the righteous and will surely honor them in life. Within this framework our author pursues certain trains of thought that might possibly settle the matter. These we shall examine briefly.

Eliphaz appeals to revelation. During the night he had experienced a vision of dread and awe in which a voice was heard, "Can mortal man be righteous before God? can a man be pure before his Maker?" (4:17). The import of this appeal to revelation is that mortal impure man never has a right to challenge the ways of his Creator. Job replies to this that he too has that same revelation of God and that he too knows that mortal man is weak and that God is pure and righteous, but instead of giving him peace, this revelation aggravates his problem. For if God will not countenance frailty or impurity in his creatures then all human existence is in jeopardy. The appeal to revelation does not solve the problem.

Eliphaz proposes another solution in that suffering and affliction are serving a disciplinary purpose. "Behold happy is the man whom God approves; therefore despise not the chastening of the Almighty. For he wounds but he binds up; he smites, but his hands heal" (5:17, 18). This line of thought is elaborated by Elihu in chapter 36. Much can be said for this explanation of affliction. It finds expression in various parts of Scripture. In fact, in our book suffering is the medium of instruction

that brings a profound insight to Job which he would never have attained had he remained in the full flush of prosperity. However much one may allow for the disciplinary factor of affliction, our author does not put it in the mouth of Job, thereby giving it a degree of acceptability, nor does he attack it. This is but to indicate that the disciplinary aspect of affliction, although worthy of consideration, is not the solution where our author wishes to end his quest.

Bildad invites Job to witness the events of past generations and to observe that God establishes righteousness and brings the wicked to naught. Job makes short work of that argument by declaring that only by an arbitrary reading of history one sees the justice of God. "It is all one [Job says]; therefore I say, he destroys both the blameless and the wicked. When disaster brings sudden death, he mocks at the calamity of the innocent. The earth is given into the hand of the wicked: he covers the faces of its judges—if it is not he, who then is it?" (9:22-24). History has no clear testimony for the justice of God.

Within the scope of traditional doctrine there was the concept of children participating in the righteousness or guilt of the parents. This is alluded to by Eliphaz (5:4) and by Zophar (20:10) in that the children of the wicked will experience the calamities due their fathers. This relieves the necessity of finding some immediate reward or retribution for either righteousness or wickedness.

This concept of children sharing in the weal or woe of their fathers stems out of the view that the family or even the community was regarded as a unit. This is commonly known as the solidarity concept. If a father had lived a godly exemplary life, his family would receive the benefits of that father's righteousness as in the case of David or Abraham. And in contrast, the wickedness of a father would realize its punishment in the lives of the children. So deeply had this taken root that we hear the lament of the exiles: "The fathers have eaten the sour grape and the children's teeth are set on edge" (Ezekiel 18:2).

In the speeches Job has caught this argument of the friends that the wicked may prosper and if he does not experience the wrath of God then surely that wrath will descend upon his children. In chapter 21 Job goes at length to describe how the wicked enjoy prosperity and health.

Have you not asked those who travel the roads,
and do you not accept their testimony
that the wicked man is spared in the day of calamity,
that he is rescued in the day of wrath?
Who declares his way to his face,
and who requites him for what he has done?
When he is borne to the grave,
watch is kept over his tomb.

The clods of the valley are sweet to him;
and those who go before him are innumerable (21:29-33).

This is in modern language: The wicked die old and have nice funerals. And more than having prosperity, their children are happy and prosperous. But suppose the argument is granted that the children will reap the evil that missed their wicked father, does that solve the problem? Hardly!

You say [Job continues] 'God stores up their iniquity for their sons.'
Let him recompense to themselves, that they may know it.
Let their own eyes see their destruction,
and let them drink the wrath of the Almighty.
For what do they care for their houses after them,
when the number of their months is cut off? (21:19-21).

No, punishment or affliction for children will not solve the inequities of the present. Let justice be meted out in the here and now!

In the course of debate Job has maintained his integrity; he has insisted that vindication must surely be his. He is certain that if he could but place his cause before God, the God whom he knew in times past would then come to vindicate Job. But alas! if only Job knew where he might find God. The God of past mercies and sure justice can no longer be apprehended, for the God of the present appears in sharp contrast to the Almighty of Job's blessed years. If then God cannot be found, and if then there will be no vindication from heaven for

He [God] has kindled his wrath against me,
and counts me as his adversary.
His troops come on together:
they have cast up seige works against me,
and camped round about my tent (19:11, 12),

then can Job look for vindication from his friends or his family? Alas, these also have cast him off. In utter loneliness without recourse to either God or man a flash of hope appears. He, Job, will appeal to the generations to come. He will write his words in a book, rather with an iron pen he will engrave them on a rock, so that they will remain as silent witness to the integrity of one whom friends and God had abandoned (19:23, 24).

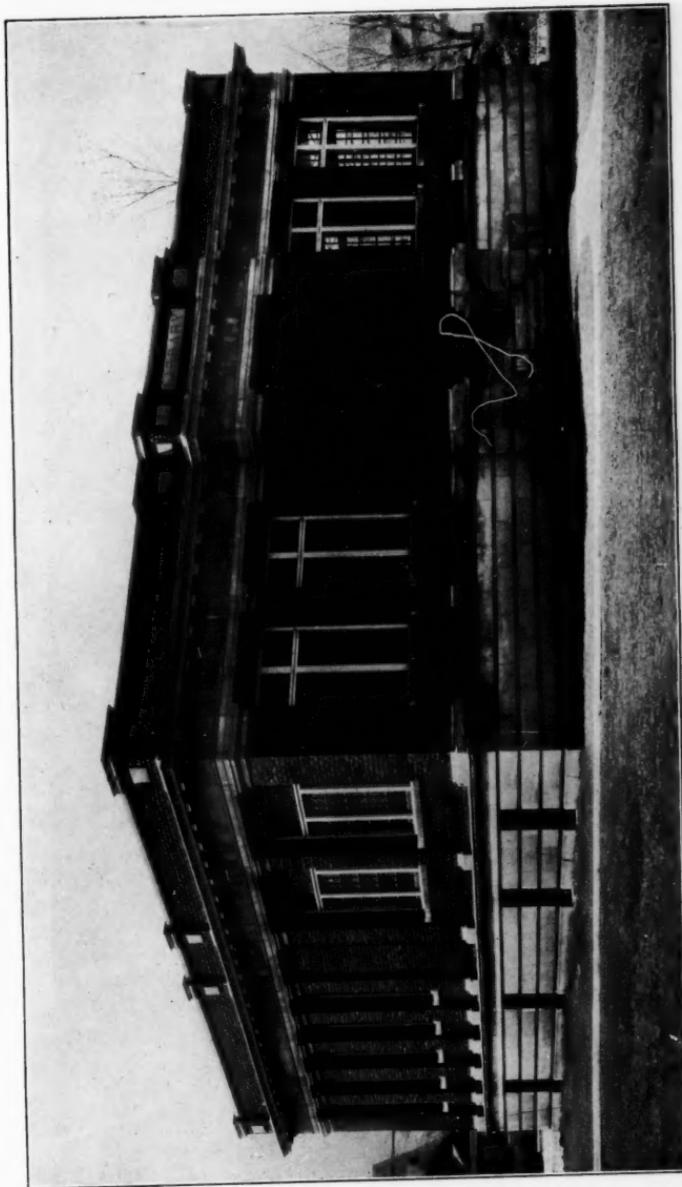
In the context of this musing, our hero abandons any present or earthly vindication and with the leap of faith he goes beyond the temporal sphere into the life beyond the grave. A detailed exegesis of the famous "I know that my Redeemer liveth" (19:25f) is not necessary here. Only simple and broad conclusions can be given. Here Job expects his vindication to be granted him by this Redeemer who at the last shall speak the final word. This Redeemer is none other than the God whom Job in all his longing cannot find. Therefore he abandons the illusive hopes of justice in the here and now. That which he had so much wanted in this present life must then be realized in the life beyond. Then he will see God and he will see that this God is on his side; this is the God his eyes shall see, and not

another. Then vindication is his and Job will then be fully justified before all moral spirits.

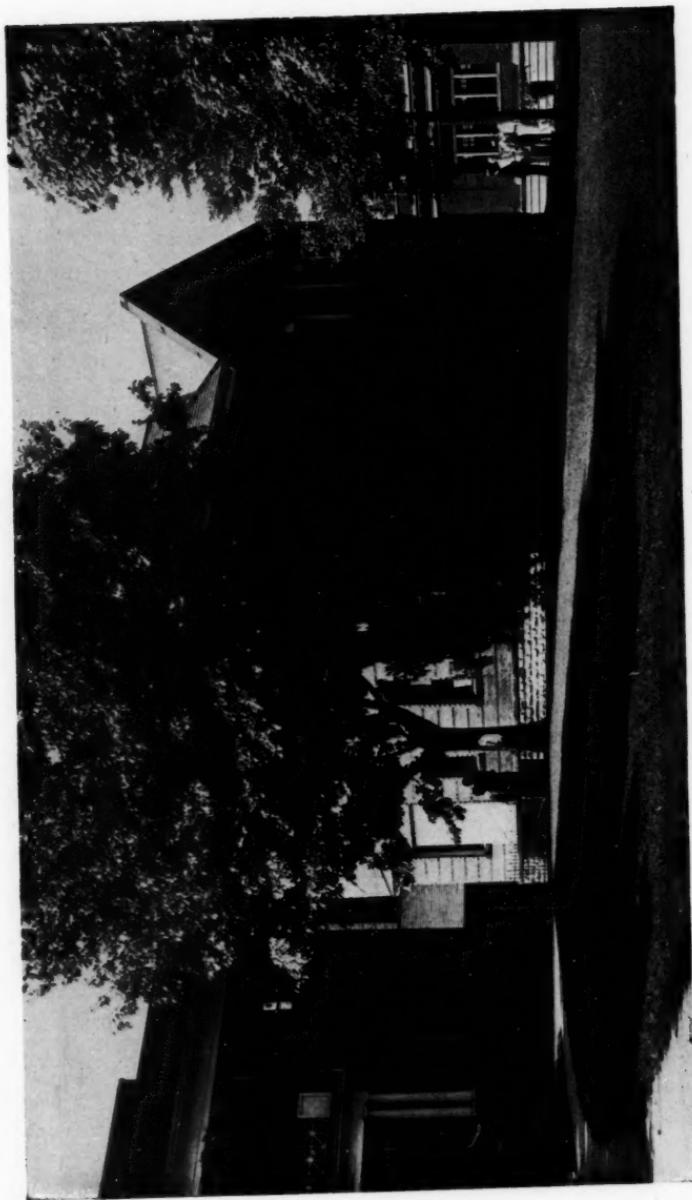
This surely is one of the peaks of faith on which many Christians have stood. And I dare say that since these words were written many a child of God in circumstances of agony and affliction has eased a raging tumult within him as in the strength of God his faith took wings to look beyond this vale of sorrow and suffering to the bliss where there shall be no more pain nor sorrow nor crying. Consequently we are rather surprised, not to say disappointed, that the author does not bring the debate to a close at this high point, for so the author regards this hope of future vindication by placing it in the mouth of Job and not in the speeches of the friends. Yet with all that can be said for this lofty declaration of faith, the author carries on the debate and dialogue with no reference to this famous Redeemer passage. The reason seems obvious, this is not to be the solution of the problem. Perhaps we may remark by way of negative anticipation, our author is not intending to have the motif of vindication in the grand and final denouement, for vindication and retribution are of the same cloth that make up the fabric of the traditional doctrine, that was a vital part of "the hearing of the ear."

In this too hasty survey we have followed our author's purpose as the dialogue progresses. Like a composer of a symphony, he has introduced themes which, although well-established in Old Testament thought, yet in the course of the debate play a secondary part. He has built upon the fundamental premise of the Old Testament that God blesses the righteous and sends afflictions upon the wicked. He has amplified this in an attempt to account for the apparent breakdowns of this premise by introducing the disciplinary role of suffering, by considering the solidarity of the family, by appeals to revelation and by the hope of a final vindication beyond the grave. The dialogue with the friends and the musings of Job come to something of a disappointing end. Even the speech of Elihu is nothing more than a review of matters that have already been given in the dialogue. However, when Elihu is done, our expectations are aroused as the author introduces the answer of the Lord to Job from the whirlwind. Surely it is here that we shall hear the word that shall resolve our problem and bring rest to our minds.

What does the Lord say from the whirlwind? Briefly, he confronts Job with the wonders of the world—the marvel and power of creation, the mysteries of nature, the unexplainable behavior of animals. All this produces a sense of awe in Job. This world in which he lives is a mystery beyond his comprehension. However, the basic purpose of this part of the book is to declare that even as in nature man confronts phenomena beyond understanding, so also in the moral world mysteries abound beyond



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Campus view of old buildings

the reach of man's mind. Let me quote from the dialogue between God and Job:

And the Lord said to Job:

"Shall a faultfinder contend with the Almighty?

He who argues with God, let him answer it."

"Gird up your loins like a man;

And I will question you, and you declare to me.

Will you even put me in the wrong?

Will you condemn me that you may be justified?" (40:1,2,7,8).

To this Job makes the following reply:

Behold I am of small account;

What shall I answer thee?

I lay my hand on my mouth.

I have spoken once, and I will not answer;

Twice, but I will proceed no further (40:3-5).

Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand,

Things too wonderful for me, which I did not know. (42:3bc).

To paraphrase the words of Jesus to Nicodemus it would be: If you cannot understand the natural world with its complexity, how can you understand the moral world. The net result, therefore, appears to be that the problem of Job is a mystery beyond his comprehension.

THE REPENTANCE OF JOB

We have now come to examine the repentance of Job in the perspective of the material we have covered. Let us note again what Job says:

I had heard of thee by the hearing of the ear,

but now my eye sees thee;

therefore I retract my words,

and repent in dust and ashes (42:5,6).

You will observe that the "hearing of the ear" is set in unfavorable contrast to "now my eye sees thee." Job here is apprised that his reliance on the traditional dogma was his folly and error. Now as though a sudden flash of light lit up his dark night, Job sensed the tragic limitation of conventional theology for solving his vexing problem. It was *tragic*, for Job, although assailing the friends' defence of retributive theology, was nonetheless pressing God for an answer within the framework of that same theology. The debate clearly demonstrated that the traditional orthodoxy of the friends did not explain the injustices and inequities of life. However, Job himself stands on that same orthodoxy, presents his complaint and awaits God's answer within that context. This now Job realizes is his folly, his sin for which he repents.

To enhance this interpretation of Job's repentance I would suggest a translation different from the Revised Standard Version's translation, "Therefore I despise myself." The change would be, "Therefore I reject my words." The text has only two words, 'AL KEN "therefore" and the verb *MA'ASTI* which allows two meanings, either "I despise, abhor" or

"I reject, retract." There is no object given, it is to be supplied according to the sense. In the nine other occurrences of this verb within this book I have found that "reject" is generally appropriate.² The translation prevalent in English versions may be a carry over from the LXX and the Vulgate both of which have "Wherefore I abhor, disparage myself." However, we may well allow "Therefore I reject my words," supplying "my words" from the context which says "therefore I have uttered what I did not understand." This then indicates that Job has abandoned his argument, his demand for the answer from God. Consequently he repents of encompassing God and shutting him up within a limited theological framework. Suddenly he awoke from his dogmatic slumbers for, as Arthur Weiser says in his Introduction of the Old Testament, Job learned that the God of the whirlwind was greater than the God of dogma.³

²A study of the usage of the verb *ma'as*, which appears in this passage, reveals that in its nine appearances in our book, it yields a proper sense by the word "reject" or "refuse." The meaning of "despise, abhor," for the above verb is also allowed by various scholars for its translation in other parts of the Old Testament. However, for our purpose, we shall test the suitability of "reject" for this verb in our book.

5:17. Eliphaz declares: "Behold blessed is the man whom God reproves, therefore do not *reject* (*tim'as*) the discipline of the Almighty."

7:16. Job here laments the agony of life in that there appears to be no purpose for living: "I reject (*ma'asti*) [my life], I shall not live for ever."

8:20. Here Bildad affirms: "Behold God will not *reject* (*yim'as*) a blameless man, nor will he strengthen the hand of evildoers."

9:21. Job sees no use in contending with God. However, he declares: "I am blameless, I regard not myself, I reject—perhaps refuse—(*'em'as*) my life."

10:3. Here Job questions God thus: "Is it good to you that you oppress, that you *reject* (*tbim'as*) the labor of your hands and favor the plan of the wicked?"

19:18. Job describes how thoroughly he has lost all social esteem and recognition: "Even children *reject* me (*ma'esuni*)."

30:1. The ones who now mock Job are those "whose fathers I rejected—perhaps refused—(*ma'asti*) to set with the dogs of my flock."

31:13. Here Job declares his concern for social justice: "If I rejected (*'em'as*) the justice of my servant and my maid."

36:5. Elihu defends God's conduct in dealing with the wicked and the righteous: "Behold God is strong and he will not *reject* (*yim'as*) [any]."

In 7:5 the verb (*yimma'es*) "it breaks out" is considered to be derived from another root although the radicals are the same.

From the above survey it appears proper to translate 42:6a: "Therefore I *reject* [my words]" (*'al ken ma'asti*).

The Septuagint yields no consistent translation for this verb. *Apopeisthai* "to put away, reject" appears the most often—three times; other verbs range in meaning from "reject" to "set at nought." The Vulgate outdoes the Greek version in having a different verb for every occurrence of the Hebrew verb. The Peshitta, however, uses one verb (*selad'*) which embraces the same concepts, "reject, refuse, despise," as found in the Hebrew *ma'as*.

³ *Einleitung in das Alte Testament* (Gottingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1949) p. 217.

We ought to take note that Job's repentance immediately follows the appearance of the Lord in the whirlwind. There must be something of special significance in this word of God that uncovered Job's folly and error. One might suppose that the Almighty would arraign Job before heaven's court to pronounce him a sinner. But this is not done. In fact one can sense a tacit acceptance of Job in that the accusations of the friends against him are not mentioned. It was not necessary for Job to be informed that he was a sinner, he had already admitted that in the debate.

A patent impression of the voice of God from the storm is the sense of awe and wonder. The world with all its vastness, its intricate design, its massive power and its gentle tenderness, all this combines to produce an unfathomable mystery. Thus the wonders of creation impressed many poets and prophets, and I dare say each of us. However, that is hardly the main purpose here for Job had already in his reflections considered the wonders of this world. Observe what he says:

He stretches out the north over the void,
and hangs the earth upon nothing.
He binds up the waters in his thick clouds,
and the cloud is not rent under them.

By his wind the heavens are made fair,
his hand pierced the fleeing serpent.
Lo, these are but the outskirts of his ways,
and how small a whisper we hear of him!
But the thunder of his power who can understand? (26:7,8,13,14).

Let me, if I can, declare what appears to be the fundamental significance of the theophany from the storm. The poet here intends that Job and every reader should sense that the approach to God through the natural order produces no satisfying results. This is the level of nature in which, to be sure, God is present but only dimly and faintly seen and understood.

How small a whisper do we hear of him
But the thunder of his power who can understand?

Nature is the low level in which man may search for God, but alas his search ends in a mystery that reveals to man his finite incompetence.

Of this Job becomes poignantly aware, but more. He now senses that his approach to God was in that same level. This was the natural moral level in which the factors of retribution and rewards are predominant. On this the friends built their case against Job and it was on this that Job also made his appeals to God. Our hero imprisoned himself within the framework of traditional retributive theology and it was his madness to imprison the Almighty within that same framework. And now with one fell swoop that framework collapses. It is totally inadequate, its limitations are now apparent. He now senses his folly, his sin in demanding that God should answer his complaint within the context of the natural moral order. For

that Job repents, for that he retracts his words and his argument and casts himself down in contrition.

NOW MY EYE SEES THEE

Here we find the hero of our book in repentance and self-abnegation. However repentance followed "Now mine eye sees thee," Samuel Terrien has well said "Repentance comes with the vision of God. It does not precede the divine grace. It is produced by God's self-offering."⁴ It is well then that we ask what Job saw when he declares, "Now my eye sees thee." What insight has God given him?

Certainly the most obvious lesson is that fellowship with God is not determined by possession of material or temporal goods. The essential "good" is not made up of worldly goods. That essential "good" or blessedness is to be realized in the fellowship with God. And this relationship with God defies all techniques of measurement. Here Job saw what he failed to see before, viz., that notwithstanding his complete nothingness in terms of wealth, health and prestige, God is his friend not his foe, his savior not his destroyer, his refuge not his attacker. Neither fortune nor misfortune prosperity nor adversity determine man's essential good, for this essential good is known only through God's gracious coming to man.

This first lesson of Job, this new insight of faith, comes to allay the haunting fears of the pious in Israel, and one may add, of the godly of all time. In deep pathos Job had cried,

Oh that I knew where I might find him,
that I might come to his seat! (23:3)

Or in distressing agony of spirit he had lamented,

He [God] breaks me down on every side, and I am gone,
and my hope has he pulled up like a tree.
He has kindled his wrath against me,
and counts me as his adversary (19:10,11).

Such were the fears and misgivings of many, expressed and repeated by the poets of Israel.

How long O Lord? Wilt thou forget me for ever?
How long wilt thou hide thy face from me?
How long must I bear pain in my soul,
And have sorrow in my heart all the day? (Ps. 13:1,2).
Why dost thou hide thy face?
Why dost thou forget our affliction and oppression?
For our soul is bowed down to the dust,
our body cleaves to the ground (44:24,25).

Surely every Christian recalls the cry of our Lord from the cross taken from the burdened soul of Israel,

⁴ *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* (New York) January 1954, p. 11.

My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?
Why art thou so far from helping me
from the words of my groaning?
O my God, I cry by day, but thou dost not answer;
and by night, but find no rest (22:1,2).

These fears and agonies of soul ran their course through Job, but now they are allayed as he sees God as his friend and Savior.

Well may we as Christians observe that this struggle of soul reaches its consummate fulfillment in the God-Man, the true man, Jesus Christ our Lord. The cry of dereliction from the cross, noted above, takes up into itself all the depth of pathos and forsakeness we have found in Job. More than that; here the perfect man takes up the pathos of *all* Israel, indeed of *all mankind* as he comes to the end of his gracious ministry, not with the praises of Israel being sung in the temple, but under the scorn of Israel's traditional faith, and with his friends far from him. In that moment of despair the haunting fear of being forsaken of God comes to consummate fulfillment in our Lord.

However, we must observe further that the cry of dereliction is followed by the words "Father into thy hands I commend my spirit." This in substance is the word of Job "But now my eye sees thee." Surely we can only ascertain in part the significance of what Job experienced by way of inner peace. So certainly we cannot know fully what Jesus experienced. However we may be well assured that, whatever Job or any Old Testament saint realized of God's fellowship in the midst of affliction, here on the cross our Lord came to a perfect understanding of his Father's presence amidst his agony and disgrace. Furthermore, whatever we may want to declare as the meaning of Christ's suffering on the cross, this much must, it seems to me, be understood that the godly may now be assured of a fellowship with God which is a "good" not measured by this world goods.

Let us take a second look at "but now mine eye sees thee" to observe that Job now accepts the sufficiency of grace rather than to demand justice and vindication. The God who appeared to Job in the whirlwind was clothed with majesty and mystery, but more than that, this God enters into relationship with his people not in terms of justice and vindication but in terms of grace and unmerited favor. Our author has skillfully directed the course of the dialogue to point up one conclusion—and that crystal clear—vindication and retribution are not the essence of God's approach to man. Rather God comes to man in grace.

Persistently and passionately Job had sought for an opportunity to plead his cause before God. If only God would listen to the merits in Job's case, certainly God would vindicate him. But such opportunity is not afforded Job, rather such opportunity is no longer sought after Job senses that his fellowship with God can never be established by an honest appraisal of

his merit. How then does God meet Job? God establishes this fellowship by means of grace. Thus it was, when God established his covenant with Abraham, so it was when God delivered Israel from bondage, and so it was in every God-man covenant or fellowship. The terms of that fellowship can never be reward or vindication. Man even in the light of the O.T. would build on such terms. This was Job's fundamental error—now he sees aright. It is the sufficiency of grace that makes fellowship with God a reality and a blessedness.

Some centuries later an ardent son of Judaism found himself in circumstances not unlike those of Job. He was Saul of Tarsus. He had drunk deep at the springs of traditional Judaism. He refused to challenge the formulation of his ancestral faith so that unwittingly distortions of Old Testament teaching had set him in the same theology of Job and his friends. And with a madness much like the ancient patriarch he drove himself with relentless fury to the attaining of righteousness by the works of the law.

This man too was confronted by God, i.e., in Jesus Christ by which he learned that whatever gains he had made, he now reckons as loss. He sensed the utter folly of establishing a fellowship with God built on the foundation of reward and merit. This folly he saw when Jesus Christ confronted him as Savior and Lord. Let it be noted that Saul the foe of the Church knew Jesus Christ (as he affirms in II Cor. 5:16) from the human point of view, which is to say from the viewpoint of his merit-vindication theology. But Paul the apostle declares that he no longer regards Christ from the human point of view for in Christ everyone is a new creation, the old—the old framework of theology for Paul—the old has passed, behold the new has come. All this is from God. It is the triumph of grace. It is *sola gratia*.

John Henry Newman caught something of the thought embodied in the book of Job in his hymn, "Lead Kindly Light."

I was not ever thus, nor pray that *thou*
Shouldst lead me on;
I loved *to choose* and see my path, but now
Lead thou me on.
I loved the garish day and, spite of fears
Pride ruled my will, remember not past years.

LITURGY IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

RICHARD C. OUDERSLUYS

The impulse to say something about liturgy in the New Testament proceeds from something more than a personal interest in the subject. For one thing, the discussions which have emerged in our Reformed Church in America in connection with the attempt to revise our own liturgy, have strengthened this impulse. Some of these resultant discussions show that it is possible to entertain grave misapprehensions regarding the worship of the early church. It appears that some in our church circles are quite well informed about St. Paul's unhappy experience with the "Schwärmerei" at Corinth. Almost too well informed, one is tempted to add, because evidently some want to regard this utterly spontaneous, charismatic worship of the Corinthian church as fully characteristic and normative for the whole primitive church. Such is not the case at all, and someone should say so. If there are no objections, I herewith volunteer my services for the cause.

The impulse to treat this subject became a settled determination on the occasion of the publication of Professor Ilion T. Jones' new work on worship,¹ a book which I conceive to be not only inadequate at several points but actually misleading at other points. Desiring to stress some features of New Testament worship which apparently escaped the attention of Professor Jones, it occurred to me that this might be a fitting opportunity to report on other liturgical studies of the New Testament as well. The latter have multiplied in number within the recent years, and the large number of studies will make necessary a rigidly selective treatment, but perhaps even a selective reporting and summarizing may prove worth while.

¹ *A Historical Approach to Evangelical Worship*, New York, 1954. The book is seriously inadequate in its treatment of the New Testament data on worship, and defective in its understanding of the Reformed theology of worship. At many points the author shows sympathy with "Fundamentalist" views of worship, and for a Presbyterian, a strange lack of appreciation for his own rich liturgical heritage.



Turning now from the motivation of our subject to the consideration of methodology in treating it, let us begin by noting what we mean by "liturgy" in the New Testament. The word in its Greek form, *leitourgia*, came into the New Testament with Old Testament associations. It was used in the Septuagint to denote the work of the priests and Levites in the tabernacle and the temple (Num. 8:22, 25; 18:4; 2 Chron. 8:14). In the New Testament the word and its cognates retain practically the same meaning. *Liturgy* then, is the term we give to that which men do and say by way of service and worship of God in the assembly of the congregation (Acts 13:2; 2 Cor. 9:12; Phil. 2:17, 30; Clement, *ad Cor.* 41, 44). The "Liturgy of the New Testament" which we propose to discuss in this study, then relates to the content and form of the worship of the primitive church, and is to be distinguished from private acts of devotion and worship practiced by individual Christians. It is proposed here to examine the nature, content and constancy of the liturgy of the early church, and to show that this worship was not formless and unorganized, but orderly, constant in the main essentials and always consistent. Two methods of approach commend themselves in a study of this nature. The one is to note and summarize what the New Testament writings say about the shape of the liturgy of the church, and the other is to note and summarize the data on how the liturgy of the church affected the shape of the New Testament writings. The former approach is the more customary, the latter, perhaps, the more needful; but both will be employed in order to throw into bold relief the liturgy of the New Testament church.

I

The first method of approach to our subject has already been characterized as the customary one. By this we mean that the careful and scholarly collation of all the pertinent references in the New Testament to early Christian worship has been done many times. Most of the pertinent references may be found in any one of the better handbooks on the history of Christian worship.² This being so, it is hardly necessary to make at this time a new and independent collection of these data. The summary made by Dr. W. C. Maxwell contains most of the relevant New Testament material, and because of its brevity and convenience it is cited herewith:

"First, that which grew out of the Synagogue: Scripture lections (I Tim. iv:13; I Thess. v: 27; Col. iv:16); Psalms and hymns (I Cor. xiv:26; Eph. v:19; Col. iii:16); common prayers (Acts ii:42; I Tim. iii:1-2) and people's Amens (I Cor. xiv:16); a sermon or exposition (I Cor. xiv:26; Acts xx:7); a confession of faith, not necessarily the formal recitation of a creed (I Cor. xv:1-4; I Tim. vi:12); and perhaps almsgiving (I Cor. xvi:1-2; II Cor. ix:10-13; Rom. xv:26).

Secondly, commonly joined to the above, the Celebration of the Lord's Supper,

² See Alexander B. Macdonald, *Christian Worship in the Primitive Church* (1934); N. Micklem, *Christian Worship* (1936); Joseph M. Nielsen, *The Earliest Christian Liturgy* (1941).

derived from the experience of the Upper Room (I Cor. xi:23; Matt. xxvi: 26-8; Mark xiv:22-4; Luke xxii:19-20). The Prayer of Consecration would include thanksgiving (Luke xxii:19; I Cor. xi:23; xiv:16; I Tim. ii:11), remembrance of our Lord's death and resurrection (Acts ii:42; Luke xxii:19; I Cor. xi:23, 25, 26), intercession (John xvii), and perhaps the recitation of the Lord's Prayer (Matt. vi:9-13;; Luke xi:2-4). Probably there were singings in this part of the services and the Kiss of peace (Rom. xvi:16; I Cor. xvi:20; I Thess. v:26; I Pet. v:14). Men and women were separated as in the synagogues; the men were bareheaded and the women veiled (I Cor. xi:6-7). The attitude of prayer was standing (Phil. i:27; Eph. vi:14; I Tim. ii:8).³

Dr. Maxwell does not mention in the above summary either baptism or ecstatic speaking, and probably for valid reasons. Some scholars are inclined to the view that baptism was at first performed in connection with the missionary preaching and only later incorporated into the worship of the gathered community. More recently, Cullmann has argued convincingly that baptism was from the first a separate, single act of worship of the gathered community, not associated with or in the setting of the Lord's Supper.⁴ Ecstatic speaking was most probably not characteristic of the entire church. Now in this summary cited from Dr. Maxwell, we should be prepared to see the usual and orderly lines along which the worship of the primitive church proceeded. There were variations, to be sure, between church and church. The New Testament contains no actual liturgies, and this is sufficient proof that the worship of the church was not a mechanical and stereotyped ritual. There was in the church, however, a customary ordering of worship, the observance of fixed forms and sequence. The New Testament knows nothing of the antithesis, charismatic versus liturgical worship, so often emphasized in evangelical circles. The early church brought together successfully the freedom of the Spirit and the restrictions of liturgy. "It is precisely in this *harmonious combination of freedom and restriction* that there lies the greatness and uniqueness of the early Christian service of worship."⁵ This understanding of early worship commends itself when the New Testament data are placed in proper relation both to what preceded and what followed the apostolic age.

The antecedents of Christian worship were naturally those of the Jewish synagogue and temple together with the prophetic ideals of worship set forth in the writings of Isaiah (ch. 6) and Ezekiel (chs. 40-48). The influence of the synagogue liturgy on the form of early Christian worship is generally admitted.⁶ The central elements of synagogue worship, the reading of the lessons, the sermon based on the lessons, the prayers, the congregational "Amen," the saying or singing of the Psalms, the prayers,

³ *An Outline of Christian Worship* (1936), p. 4f.

⁴ *Early Christian Worship* (1953), p. 31.

⁵ *Ibid.* p. 33. See also Henry J. Cadbury, "The Informality of Early Christianity," *Crozer Quarterly*, vol. xxi (1944), pp. 246ff.

⁶ See W. O. E. Österley, *The Jewish Background of the Christian Liturgy* (1925), pp. 84ff; Nielsen, *op. cit.*, pp. 72-102; C. W. Dugmore, *The Influence of the Synagogue upon the Divine Office* (1944), pp. 1ff.

the recitation of the Shema and the Decalogue, the Shemoneh Esreh or the Eighteen Benedictions, constituted a liturgy in which both Jewish and Gentile Christians could easily join. It is not surprising in the least, to discover the greater number of the above elements of synagogue liturgy mentioned in the Pauline letters together with other very obvious liturgical formulae.⁷ The degree to which the temple liturgy influenced early Christian worship tends to be a more debatable matter. Generally speaking, the majority of handbooks on worship underestimate it.⁸ It should not be overlooked that the synagogue liturgy was taken over from that of the temple and was oriented toward the service of the temple.⁹ Moreover, such elements of temple liturgy as the daily morning and evening hours, the blessing of the priest, the Amen, Alleluiah and doxologies, the prayers and the use of the Psalter as a hymn-book, do appear in descriptions of early church worship.¹⁰ Needless to say, the sacrificial ritual and system was discarded by the church. The author of the letter to the Hebrews makes it a point to declare that this system had only a symbolical, typical significance which was completed and fulfilled by Christ who "appeared once for all at the end of the age to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself."¹¹ The service of the Upper Room became for the church the fitting commemoration of this perfect sacrifice of Christ. So much then for the antecedents of Christian worship.

We turn next to the period following that of our New Testament. In the first quarter of the second century, we encounter two interesting descriptions of Christian worship. The one is found in the Didache which provides Eucharistic prayers (chs 9, 10), directions for Sunday worship (ch 14), etc. The other is contained in the well known letter of the younger Pliny, the Roman governor of Bithynia and Pontus, written to Trajan c. A.D. 112, which states:

"(The Christians we examined) claimed that their entire offence or their entire error was confined to this that they gathered regularly on a fixed day before sunrise to sing antiphonally a song (*carmen*) to Christ as to a god, and to bind themselves by an oath not to commit this or that crime but rather to commit no theft, no murder, no adultery, not to break their word, not to deny possession of something entrusted to them. Then it is their custom to disperse and then reassemble to share a common meal together, but an ordinary and innocent affair . . . "¹²

⁷ Cullmann, *op. cit.*, pp. 23-24.

⁸ Ilion T. Jones says, "It is generally agreed that Temple worship had little influence on either Christ or his early followers" *op. cit.*, p. 67; and even Maxwell remarks, "the Temple worship left little mark upon Christian worship . . ." *op. cit.*, p. 2.

⁹ Oesterley, *op. cit.*, p. 87. See also Allen Cabaniss, "Liturgy-Making Factors in Primitive Christianity," *Journal of Religion*, vol. xxiii (1943), p. 47.

¹⁰ A collation of N.T. passages having any possible bearing upon worship will be found in Cabrol and Leclercq, *Reliquiae Liturgicae Vetustissimae*, (1909) i, pp. 1-51.

¹¹ Hebrews 9:26.

¹² For convenience, the translation reproduced here is from Oscar Cullmann, *Early Christian Worship* (1953), p. 22.

One notes in the above description, antiphonal or liturgical singing after the Jewish fashion, a fixed day of worship which may be taken as Sunday, an oath not to commit certain crimes which may well be a reference to the recitation of the Decalogue, and a reference to a common meal which may have been just that or possibly a sacramental meal. Moving ahead another twenty-five years, we encounter a third description of worship in the *First Apology of Justyn Martyr* (ch. 47), the relevant portion of which is as follows:

"On the day called after the sun a meeting of all who live in cities or in the country takes place at a common spot and the Memoirs of the Apostles or the writings of the Prophets are read as long as time allows. When the reader is finished the leader delivers an address through which he exhorts and requires them to follow noble teachings and examples. Then we all rise and send heavenwards prayers. And, as said before, as soon as we are finished praying, bread and wine mixed with water are laid down and the leader too prays and gives thanks, as powerfully as he can, and the people join in, in saying the 'Amen'; and now comes the distribution to each and the common meal on the gifts that have been brought and to those who are not present it is sent by the hands of the deacon . . ."¹³

When we summarize the information from our sources we discover the following outline of worship:

- Hymns and singings, including antiphonal singing
- Confession of sins
- The Lord's Prayer
- The Ten Commandments or other Baptismal vows
- The Lessons, evidently read from the Gospels or the Prophets, as long as time allowed.
- Common prayers
- The Sacrament of the Supper
- The Prayer of Consecration: evidently these prayers were already fixed at this time since they are given in full by the Didache.
- The Amen response of the congregation
- Voluntary contributions, offerings for the relief of the poor
- Concluding prayers of thanksgiving and dismissal

When one examines both the Jewish precedents and these later Christian orders, the impressive thing is the amazing continuity in the main essentials with the data of our New Testament. Worship in the primitive church was obviously not of the informal, spontaneous, prayer-meeting or testimony-meeting kind. The excesses of freedom in the worship of the Corinthian church were evidently abnormal, and no doubt for that very reason, received such forthright censure from Paul. We conclude that the New Testament church successfully held in harmony freedom of the Spirit with liturgical restrictiveness. Scripture lections, Psalms and prayers, sermon or exposition, the people's "Amen," and sacraments were customary and normal among all Christian gatherings for worship. These constituted the liturgy of the New Testament church. Other acts of worship outside these mentioned above, serve to remind us of how full and rich was the worship

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 33.

of the early church, and these items serve to rebuke us who tend so easily to mistake barrenness of worship for simplicity.

II

We turn now to the second approach to our subject, namely, the examination of how the liturgy of the church affected the shape of some of our New Testament writings. That they were so affected seems evident even from a cursory reading of them. The requirements of liturgy explain not only the well-known doxology at the end of the Lord's Prayer, but also the fuller Matthaean version of it as compared with that of Luke. Christian psalms and hymns are numerous in our New Testament writings (Luke 1:46-55, 67-79; 2:29-32; Ephes. 5:14; I Tim. 3:16; Rev. 5:9, 10, 12, 13; 12:10-12; 19:1-2, 6; etc.). The numerous doxologies and confessional formulae of various New Testament passages argue for a like liturgical influence.

A much more extensive and significant influence of liturgical factors in the making of our New Testament is claimed by the scholars. Many years ago the eminent English scholars John Mason Neale and Joseph Edward Field argued for an impressive relationship between the apostolic liturgy and the Epistle to the Hebrews. Dr. Paul Levertoff has advocated the influence of the liturgical seasons of the synagogue upon the sequence of events in Matthew's gospel.¹⁴ Dr. Philip Carrington has contended for a similar influence on the arrangement and sequence of Mark's gospel.¹⁵ Professor F. L. Cross has suggested that the First Letter of Peter reflects the Paschal Liturgy or Easter-eve service of the church.¹⁶ This service, it may be recalled, continued uninterrupted the entire evening and included the various stages of the new life of the believer, from baptism through communion. For many years scholars have debated the liturgical factor as an exegetical key to the Johannine writings, and just when the debate was subsiding, Professors Cullmann and Stauffer reopened it with new vigor. Stauffer characterizes John as pre-eminently a *liturgist*, and in speaking of John's gospel he says, "it was written for liturgical purposes; its main sections had in all probability long been used in worship before the aged John committed the whole corpus in literary form to the care of his congregation."¹⁷ In fact, Stauffer refers to this liturgical purpose of John as a sufficient explanation for almost all the unique features of the gospel: "its liking for sacramental formulae, the solemn 'I' sayings, the Johannine 'we', the veiled references to the beloved disciple, the enigmatic expres-

¹⁴ In *A New Commentary on Holy Scripture*, ed. Gore, Goudge, Guillaume (1928), pp. 128ff.

¹⁵ *The Primitive Christian Calendar* (1952).

¹⁶ See the reference in J. W. C. Wand, "The Lessons of First Peter," *Interpretation*, vol. ix (1955), pp. 387ff.

¹⁷ *New Testament Theology* (1955), p. 40f.

sion of 19:35, and finally, for everything that has been said about the unhistorical character of the fourth Gospel and against its apostolic origin."¹⁸ Professor Cullmann has contributed measurably to the sacramental interpretation of the Fourth Gospel with his significant discussion, *Early Christian Worship*. He discovers in this gospel an astonishingly large number of passages which give decisive place to baptism and the Lord's Supper. Now it is only fair to say that all of these afore-mentioned studies are variously estimated by scholars. Some present demonstrations which are convincing, whereas others are not satisfactory. In some cases one suspects a reading back into the New Testament of liturgical influence that cannot be found there until one has assumed that it ought to be there. The studies have been cited here without prejudice, however, as illustrations of possible relationship between New Testament liturgy and New Testament literature.

One book where liturgical influence is most probable has not been mentioned until now, and that is the *Apocalypse of John*.¹⁹ This writing contains not only a larger number of Christian hymns than any other New Testament book, but also presents us with the concluding and unforgettable picture of early church worship. At the very outset of his book, the author prepares the mind of the reader for a discussion of Christian worship by reminding us that he saw his visions on the Lord's Day (1:10). Although exiled and kept from the Sunday services of his Ephesian congregations, the author worships with them "in the Spirit." What John proceeds to describe in his book is the kind of worship which was common to his churches and the essentials of which we have previously encountered in other passages of the New Testament. As a matter of fact, the *Apocalypse* serves as a bridge between the worship of the Jewish synagogue and temple and that depicted in the *Didache* and *Justyn Martyr*. Having this obvious importance for the study of liturgy in the New Testament, the book deserves some detailed consideration.

Two things immediately impress the reader of the *Apocalypse*. The first is the amazing correlation drawn between earthly and heavenly worship. The element of amazement is that the heavenly worship is pictured as a magnified form of the earthly worship. John's picture of worship in heaven is built on the familiar liturgy of his Ephesian churches.²⁰ The

¹⁸ *Op. cit.*, p. 41.

¹⁹ The more important of the recent studies of the liturgy of the *Apocalypse* are those of Allen Cabaniss, "Liturgy-Making Factors in Primitive Christianity," *Journal of Religion*, vol. xxiii (1943), pp. 43-58, and "A Note on the Liturgy of the *Apocalypse*," in *Interpretation*, vol. 7 (1953), pp. 78-86; Otto A. Piper, "The *Apocalypse* of John and the Liturgy of the Ancient Church," *Church History*, vol. xx (1951), pp. 10-22; Lucetta Mowry, "Revelation 4-5 and Early Christian Liturgical Usage," *Journal of Biblical Literature*, vol. lxxi (1952), pp. 75-84; Oscar Cullmann, *Early Christian Worship* (1953), pp. 7f; and E. Stauffer, *New Testament Theology* (1955), pp. 39-43, 225-231.

²⁰ So James Moffatt in *The Expositor's Greek Testament*, and most of the scholars whose works were previously cited in note 19.

second impressive feature of the Apocalypse is that John uses the framework of liturgy to present the drama of the last times. Noting this presentation of eschatology within a magnificent liturgiology, Professor Cullmann remarks:

"Thus he sees the whole drama of the last days in the context of the early Christian service of worship which, so to speak, has its counterpart and at the same time its fulfilment in the coming aeon, so that all that takes place in the gathering of the early Christian community, seen from this side, appears as an anticipation of that which in the last day takes place from God's side."²¹

Although many clues to the interpretation of the Apocalypse have been suggested,²² the liturgical interpretation is the most inviting. It is my personal conviction that the liturgical framework of John's eschatology is more than a mere literary device. It appears to me that John is thoroughly persuaded that the world is moving on to a final day of perfected worship of God. He encompasses in his vision a day when the whole cosmos will be a temple of God, and eternity will be one great Sabbath. Then all God's people will be a kingdom of priests, serving him day and night in his temple. What a liturgy is unfolded before our eyes in this book! A liturgy that serves to picture heavenly worship, that serves to picture the drama of the last times, is something we ignore at our peril. Since detailed exegesis cannot be attempted in the brief time allotted to this lecture, we shall content ourselves with a general commentary on the more important passages, hoping at least to depict something of the movement and scope of John's liturgy. Out of a larger number of relevant passages,²³ we shall comment briefly on portions of chapters four, five, seven, and nineteen through twenty-two.

Chapter four introduces us to the worship of God, the Creator. After an invitation to worship (verse 1), we are ushered into a room where sits enthroned a silent, transcendent, eternal Figure. With typical Jewish reluctance to pronounce the name of God, the author contents himself with saying that he saw "One seated on the throne. And he who sat there appeared like jasper and carnelian, and round the throne was a rainbow that looked like an emerald" (verses 2, 3). Twenty-four other thrones are now mentioned, on which sit the elders clothed in white garments and wearing golden crowns as priests and kings. The number of the elders, reminiscent of the twelve sons of Israel and the twelve apostles, no doubt, represent the church of the Old and New Testament times. Also around the throne, on each side, are the four living creatures who sing the Trisagion of Isaiah:

²¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 7.

²² Drama was the suggested background of framework by Albertus Pieters, *The Lamb, the Woman and the Dragon* (1937), and even more recently by John W. Bowman, *The Drama of the Book of Revelation* (1955). It has always seemed incongruous to me to interpret so Jewish a book as the Apocalypse on the background of Greek drama.

²³ Rev. 4; 5; 7; 8:3-5; 10; 14:1-5; 15; 19:1—22:5.

"Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty,
who was and is and is to come!"

The singing of the Trisagion is followed by the choir of elders who sing a hymn of praise to God as the Creator:

"Worthy art thou, our Lord and God,
to receive glory and honor and power,
for thou didst create all things,
and by thy will they existed and were created."

When we turn next to the fifth chapter, we see that worship is also directed to God as Redeemer, and here the figure of the Lamb is central. The worship of the early church was not Jewish worship with a few added trimmings. We judge from the portrayal which follows that it was explicitly and thoroughly Christological. Chapter five introduces us to the Lamb who stands between the throne and the four cherubim and among the elders. He is a strange Lamb. He looks as if he had been slain, and yet he too is obviously divine for from him proceed the seven horns, the seven eyes, and the seven spirits of God. Moreover he is worshipped, and before him bow the four living creatures, the elders and every other creature, and they sing a new song:

"Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing.

"To him who sits upon the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might for ever and ever. Amen!"

Early worship, however, was not only Christological, but it was Word-of-God worship. Much is made in this chapter of a scroll in the hands of the One seated on the throne. Written within and without, it is sealed with seven seals, and no one seems worthy enough to open the roll and break the seals. Even John weeps that no one is found worthy to open this important scroll, but his weeping ceases at the announcement: "Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals." We have here an obvious reference to the reading of the Old Testament scriptures in the Sunday services of the early church.²⁴ And let it be noted that these scriptures must be read Christologically or else they remain a sealed book. Christ alone is the key to the Old Testament.²⁵ Professor Piper makes the suggestion that the sealed scroll of 5:1-3 should be placed in contrast with the open scroll of 10:8. The latter scroll John is commanded to eat and thereupon is empowered to prophesy. Professor Piper would interpret the two passages as indicative of the sealed character of the Old Testament as compared with the open character of the New Testament, and he remarks: "the New Testament is a self-explanatory work, the understanding of which could offer no special difficulty, whereas the Old Testament requires an extra

²⁴ So Otto Piper, *op. cit.*, pp. 14-15. Lucetta Mowry identifies the sealed scroll with the Jewish Torah, *op. cit.*, p. 83.

²⁵ Otto Piper, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

gift of interpretation."²⁶ The more important point here, however, is that Christ is worthy to open the scroll because he has won a victory and ransomed God's people by his passion and death (verses 5, 9).

"Worthy art thou to take the scroll and open its seals,
for thou wast slain and by thy blood didst ransom men for God
from every tribe and tongue and people and nation,
and hast made them a kingdom and priests to our God,
and they shall reign on earth."

In connection with the singing of the *Agnus Dei*, just noted, John tells us that those who sang held eternal harps and golden bowls of incense, which, as John declares, are the prayers of the saints. The Word-of-God service included as important elements, prayers and hymns.

Chapter 7:9-17 introduce us again to the majestic figures described in the previous scenes, but conspicuous here are two new groups. There is first a glorious number, 144,000, taken and sealed out of every tribe of the sons of Israel. And then there is another great multitude which no man could number from every nation, tribe, people and tongue. The separate identity of the two groups is not our major concern at this moment. Whether Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians or the Church Triumphant and the Church Militant is not too crucial. Together the groups represent the worshipping congregation which sings the closing doxology of the service to God and the Lamb, and who accompany this with a final choral "Amen":

"Salvation belongs to our God who sits upon the throne and to the Lamb.
Amen. Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power
and might be to our God for ever and ever. Amen."

Before we conclude these few remarks about the liturgy of the Apocalypse, we should turn to the closing chapters (19:1-22:5), where we have depicted the proper climax of all Christian worship—the sacrament. In these chapters we have set before us a great, final Eucharist. Because John is describing here not only the sacrament as known to his churches, but also the heavenly Supper, and the final Supper of the final Church of the final time, his description does not permit of easy analysis. The imagery is mixed, his language tumultuous, as he tries to speak of that which is almost more than faltering human words can describe. Heavenly trumpets sound! Angels and martyrs play on their eternal harps. Heavenly choirs sing the *Agnus Dei*, the *Trisagion*, and a final Hallelujah chorus which resounds throughout heaven like a final chorus of Handel's *Messiah*.²⁷ And then what a Table, what a Supper! There will be gathered the fruits of the harvest of history. There will be gathered all of God's People of all the ages, and all will be priests. His name shall be in the foreheads, and they will serve him day and night in his temple. About this last Table, of which all our tables are but anticipations, shall be gathered the final

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

²⁷ Stauffer, *op. cit.*, p. 202.

Church. No wonder that John says the angel commanded him: "Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb."

In the last book of the New Testament, then, and for the last time, the liturgy of the early church has been set before us. This time, however, the Seer of the Apocalypse has placed the Scripture lections, psalms and hymns, doxologies and confessions, prayers and responsive "Amens," and the sacraments in a frame-work of heavenly, eschatological worship that dominates both his book and its readers. The significance of what he did does not easily escape us. From John we learn the profound meaning and importance of the liturgy of the New Testament church. *True worship is always eschatological worship.*

And so tomorrow or whenever again we make our way to the house of God for worship, whether to stand in the pulpit or to sit in the pew, let us be concerned to make our liturgy that of the New Testament church. Why? For what reason? For the reason that true worship is always eschatological worship, and we want to prepare our own hearts and minds and those of the congregations committed to our care for the liturgy of heaven.

"Here afford us, Lord, a taste
Of our everlasting feast."

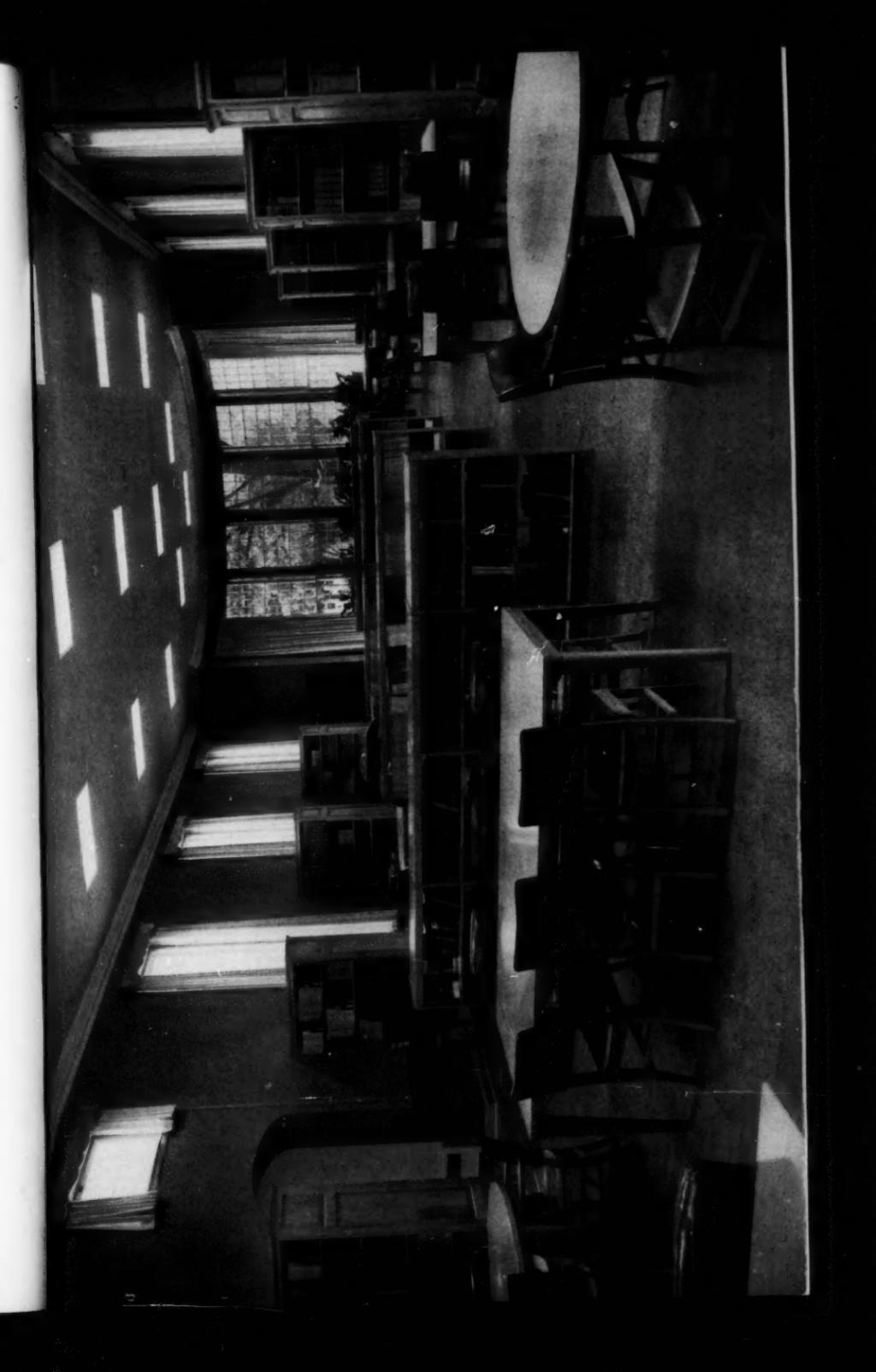
THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE ASCENSION TO REFORMED THEOLOGY

M. EUGENE OSTERHAVEN

The meaning of existence is one of the great riddles of the ages. For the Christian, however, that riddle has been solved, for he knows that the answer is in God. Faith in him does not answer all the questions—there is still much mystery—but the Christian at least knows One who makes his own existence meaningful and who makes sense out of our human existence as a whole. In the revelation from God which interprets life's meaning we learn that certain momentous events have transpired in this order of reality of which we are a part. Chief among these are creation, the call of Abraham, the exodus and establishment of the theocracy, the incarnation of the Son of God and his subsequent death, resurrection and ascension to heaven. History's center, we believe, is the mighty drama of redemption centering in Jesus Christ, our Lord. Certain events in Gospel history have received great emphasis among us. The birth of the Savior, celebrated in festival and in song, his death and resurrection whereby our redemption was accomplished—these, largely because of the general structure of our ecclesiastical community existence—are ever remembered by us, and it is well that they should be.

The situation is much different, however, with respect to two other equally significant events in the history of redemption, the ascension of our Lord and his gift of the Holy Spirit to the Church. While the one event receives only incidental mention in the Confession of Faith of the Reformed Church in America, the other is not mentioned at all. Such emphasis, or lack thereof, I believe, is but a reflection of the emphasis they have had in our thinking. Yet the New Testament ascribes to them very great importance and, inasmuch as the Reformed Churches have cherished the thought that they must ever be re-formed according to God's Word, it is well that we address ourselves to one or both of these matters. Directing our attention principally to the ascension, we observe that, notwithstanding the scant attention given that event in our circles, it actually





has had an important place in the theology of the Reformed Churches. Indeed, one can say that *only* in Reformed theology has the ascension received anything like an approximation to its Biblical importance.

It is for these reasons then that I have chosen to make this subject the theme of my address with the hope that the exalted Head of the Church may be pleased to use these remarks to his glory and our edification. I should add that an additional reason for my interest in this subject is that my thinking has been stimulated by the studies of contemporary continental scholars who, in the exigencies of our time, have given fresh treatment to the highly relevant themes of the ascension and the present Lordship of Christ.¹

I.

It is well first that we review the meaning of the ascension of our Lord as it is interpreted for us in the New Testament. As we do so we remember immediately that the ascension meant the return of Christ to his heavenly home. He had already predicted it in the days of his ministry before his passion. He once said to Jews who were disturbed about his teaching, "Doth this offend you? What if ye shall see the Son of Man ascend up where he was before;"² Subsequently he made repeated reference to his return to the Father in words familiar to all of us. He would return whence he had come to prepare a place for his disciples and to send them the Holy Spirit.³ At the end of his sojourn among us while his disciples were with him "he was taken up and a cloud received him out of their sight." The angels who appeared as the disciples "looked steadfastly towards heaven as he went up," informed them that this same Jesus who was "taken up from [them] into heaven, shall so come in like manner as [they had] seen him go into heaven."⁴ The rest of the New Testament witness concurs in that interpretation of the event. Peter both speaks⁵ and writes⁶ of Christ "who is gone into heaven and is on the right hand of God." The Apostle Paul was prostrated by a light and a voice which came to him from heaven and he did not hesitate to relate that transforming experience with Christ later in his ministry.⁷ The "mystery of godliness," according to Paul, which cannot be disputed, is that "God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the gentiles,

¹ I mention especially A. A. van Ruler, *De Vervulling van de Wet*; O. Cullmann, *Koenigsherrschaft Christi und Kirche im Neuen Testament*, *Early Christian Confessions, Christ and Time*, "Zur neuesten Diskussion ueber die Exousiae in Roem. 13:1," *Theologische Zeitschrift*, Sept./Okt., 1954; W. A. Visser 't Hooft, *The Kingship of Christ*.

² John 6:62.

³ John 7:33; 8:14, 21; 14:2f., 12, 28; 16:5, 7, 10, 16, 28; 20:17.

⁴ Acts 1:9ff.

⁵ Acts 2:33; 3:21; 5:31.

⁶ I Pet. 3:22.

⁷ Acts 9:3-5; 22:6-8; 26:13-15.

believed on in the world, received up into glory."⁸ As he had come from glory, now that his work was completed, he would return to glory.

The ascension meant further that Christ's saving work was completed so that he could appear in heaven for us. In the epistle to the Hebrews, where this teaching is stated most clearly, every reference to redemption is in the past implying completion once and for all. "When he had by himself purged our sins [he] sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high."⁹ His session in heaven is to intercede for his brethren; we are specifically told that at least four times in this letter.¹⁰ He is said to be eminently qualified for this task because of his participation in our human frailty and his susceptibility to temptation while among us. Both human and divine, he could offer the perfect sacrifice, himself, and is an all-sufficient advocate and intercessor.¹¹ His presence in heaven is a guarantee that our interests will be guarded and a pledge of our final salvation. If he goes and prepares a place for us, he will come again and receive us unto himself, that where he is there we may be also.¹² Our catechism states the matter beautifully when it gives the advantages of the ascension as: "First, that he is our advocate in the presence of his Father in heaven; secondly, that we have our flesh in heaven, as a sure pledge that he, as the head, will also take up to himself us, his members; thirdly, that he sends us his Spirit as an earnest, by whose power we seek the things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God, and not things on earth."¹³

The ascension also signified the assumption of Jesus to the place of power. Since "all power is given unto (him) in heaven and in earth" his disciples need not fear as they discharge their responsibility to evangelize all nations.¹⁴ Those words had been spoken just before his departure but a few days later Peter, on Pentecost, spoke of his "being by the right hand of God exalted"¹⁵ and later references to his possession of divine authority and power are frequent.¹⁶ Having "ascended up on high, he led captivity captive" and "is on the right hand of God, angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him."¹⁷

⁸ I Tim. 3:16.

⁹ Heb. 1:3 *et al.*

¹⁰ 4:14; 6:20; 7:25; 9:24.

¹¹ Cf. I John 2:1f.

¹² John 14:2.

¹³ Q. 49. Cf. T. F. Torrance, "The Witness of the Reformed Churches in the World Today: Our Witness Through Doctrine," in the *Proceeding of the Seventeenth General Council of the Alliance of Reformed Churches Holding the Presbyterian Order*, p. 141, for a fine statement on the relation of the ascension to the Christian's hope. Cf. A. A. van Ruler, *op cit.*, p. 106.

¹⁴ Matt. 28:18ff.

¹⁵ Acts 2:33.

¹⁶ Acts 7:55f.; Rom. 8:34; I Cor. 15:25; Eph. 1:20; Phil. 2:9ff.; Heb. 10:12f.

¹⁷ Eph. 4:8; I Pet. 3:22.

Finally, the ascension signified the gift of the Holy Spirit to the Church. Allusion has been made to this earlier and here I simply underscore the fact, Jesus had explicitly informed his disciples the night before his death that it was expedient for them that he go away. "For," said he, "if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you."¹⁸ When the Holy Spirit was given at Pentecost Peter, after proclamation of the resurrection and ascension of that same Jesus whom they had crucified, said that Christ, "having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear."¹⁹ In the fourth chapter of his epistle to the Ephesians the Apostle Paul has many things to say about the Church, the body of Christ, some of which are most important for an understanding of the purpose of the ascension. A point which he wishes to make is that the gifts needed for the life and ministry of the Church must come from Christ.

"Unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Wherefore he saith, when he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. (Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.) And his gifts were that some should be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, until we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ; so that we may no longer be children tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine by the cunning of men, by their craftiness in deceitful wiles. But, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up into him in all things, who is the head, even Christ, from whom the whole body fitly joined and knit together by every joint with which it is supplied, when each part is working properly, makes bodily growth and upbuilds itself in love."

I have quoted the entire passage because of the light which it throws on our subject. When this passage is supplemented with the twelfth chapter of first Corinthians the importance of Christ's gifts to his Church is seen even more clearly. The ascension, says Jesus, is necessary that he may send his Spirit and supervise the distribution of gifts to the members of his body.

II.

Having reviewed the meaning of the ascension I desire now to speak of its significance to Reformed theology. I stated in my introduction that only in Reformed theology does the doctrine of the ascension of Christ begin to approximate its Biblical representation. I can only outline here how that thesis could be sustained and I shall do so in three particulars.

¹⁸John 16:7; cf. 14:15-18, 25f.; 15:26; 16:13ff.

¹⁹Acts 2:33.

First, Reformed theology has given serious attention to the biblical teaching concerning the Lordship of Christ. In the pre-Reformation Church this doctrine was never worked out. Athanasius has powerful passages on our Lord's triumph over death and evil and revels in the fact that He has gained the victory;²⁰ Gregory of Nyssa extols our Lord's deity and speaks often of his power over sin, death and the devil in the sections of *The Great Catechism* where redemption is discussed;²¹ Augustine spoke of the "Kingdom of Christ" by which he meant the Church;²² Aquinas referred to Christ as the "head" of the human race and of the Church frequently,²³ and others undoubtedly did the same, but the rich biblical significance of the doctrine was not worked out until later.

During the age of the Reformation Luther had some powerful things to say about Christ's victory over the powers of darkness, as Aulen has reminded us,²⁴ and he believed that Christ is Lord of the Church and also of the world. However, in his own teaching and especially in later Lutheranism there is greater emphasis on the antithesis between the two realms, that of the Church and of the world, so that "the Church appears to be the only realm in which, in this present dispensation, Christ's Kingship is truly operative and relevant and . . . no explicit theological foundation is laid for a consistent witness by the Church concerning Christ's Lordship in and over the world."²⁵

In his formulation of the work of Christ Calvin gave to the Church the teaching of the *triplex munus*, the three-fold office of prophet, priest and king. In the discussion on the regal office in the *Institutes* Calvin makes it synonymous with Christ's Lordship, saying that "the Scripture often styles him Lord because the Father has given him authority over us, that he may exercise his own dominion by the agency of his son."²⁶ In his comments on Mark 16:19 Calvin remarks that "Christ was taken up into heaven, not to enjoy blessed rest at a distance from us, but to govern the world for the salvation of all believers." In numerous places in the commentaries the universal and sovereign reign of Christ is mentioned, Calvin desiring to impress upon his readers the splendor and dignity of Christ's person and office.²⁷ He is King of Kings and Lord of Lords from whom comes all authority and power.

In his volume entitled *The Kingship of Christ* Dr. Visser 't Hooft asserts that Calvin does not make clear *in what manner* Christ is King of this world and he quotes a sentence from the 20th chapter of the fourth

²⁰*The Incarnation of the Word*, par. 24ff.

²¹*Vid.*, chaps. 24-32.

²²*The City of God*, XX, 9, 1.

²³*Summa Theol.*, Q. 8, a. 1, 3, 4; Q. 48, a. 1; Q. 49, a. 1, and a. 3.

²⁴*Christus Victor*.

²⁵W. A. Visser 't Hooft, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

²⁶*II, XV*, v.

²⁷*Vid.*, e.g., *Comm. on the Ep. to the Heb.* 1:3-10.

book of the *Institutes* where Calvin says that "the spiritual kingdom of Christ and the civil order are things which are far away from each other."²⁸ It should be remarked, however, that Calvin does not drive the two realms apart. He is making a necessary distinction and he states in the next paragraph that these two orders "are in no respect at variance with each other."²⁹ Moreover, he assumes that the state and civil order will be Christian, and he refers to "*Christian government*," "*Christian magistrates*," and "*Christian princes*" in his discussion. Christ is Lord of the State and society as well as of the Church to Calvin.

Dr. Visser 't Hooft states that there are in Calvin two lines of thought in this question of just how clearly and consistently Calvin taught the universal reign of Christ. "The world is sometimes seen from the angle of common grace and the law of nature," in Calvin, he avers. "In that case the accent falls on the orders of creation; the world and the state exist as if in a realm by themselves. But this is not the dominating motive of his thought. The main accent falls on the universal sovereignty of Christ; the world and the state are conceived in a definitely Christocentric manner. It is possible to interpret Calvin as Dr. Kuyper has done in his Stone Lectures of 1898 as the advocate of a theocentric rather than a Christocentric view of the world and the political order and so to construct a 'Calvinistic' theology of orders of creation in which the decisive word is not spoken by the Christ who makes all things new. But it is certainly more true to Calvin's own intentions to find in him, as Wilhelm Niesel has done, a Christocentric view of the civil order based on the royal office of Christ, according to which all government is rooted in the fact that Jesus Christ sits at the right hand of God."³⁰

I subscribe to Dr. Visser 't Hooft's thesis that, although the Protestant confessions and theologies accepted the teaching of the three-fold office of Christ after Calvin's time, that the royal office was most often defined in terms of the Church. The confessions, he says, "do not call the Church to a persistent and joyful witness concerning Christ's present Lordship in all realms of life. The general tendency of Protestantism becomes, therefore, more and more to describe the Reign of Christ as an invisible, spiritual and heavenly reality which is located in the *souls* of men. This shift of emphasis from the universal, all-embracing sovereignty of Christ over the whole world to a purely inward sovereignty leads inevitably to the pietistic conception that the affairs of this world are the sole concern of the secular powers and that the Church has no word for the world but only for individuals who are to be saved out of this world. A voice such as that of Johann Georg Hamann—who wrote in the days of Voltaire and

²⁸*Op. cit.*, p. 23.

²⁹IV, XX, 2.

³⁰*Op. cit.*, p. 23f.

Frederick the Great that Christianity is above all a political sect because it has a King, who proclaims a Kingdom—remains a voice crying in the wilderness. The whole trend is in the other direction. Christianity becomes more and more introspective and the Church knows less and less what to do with the world-embracing and world-shaking affirmations of the Bible.”³¹

Dr. Visser 't Hooft sketches the 19th century neglect of the kingly and priestly offices of Christ in favor of his prophetic character. But he was no longer a “priestly prophet whose word is confirmed by his sacrifice, nor the royal prophet who overcomes the world ever in and through his death.” He becomes merely another religious teacher and the Church is left alone with itself—without a King.

I have quoted from this study at length because I believe the positions taken to be so very true. The fact of the Lordship of Christ, in the historical and Biblical sense of the term, was forgotten. It was forgotten because the resurrection and ascension of Christ were no longer believed. Supernatural Christianity, as he shows, was considered impossible and obsolete. However, his study is necessarily a statement of the *general* theological situation and shares the points of strength and weakness of such a study. It is not true of *all* theology; in particular it is not true of what might be called the classical stream of Reformed theology. Even in the rationalistic 18th century, and in the liberal 19th century, the more definitive theological writings, studied in Reformed theological schools, had sections on the kingly office of Christ considered universally as well as in terms of the Church. I do not say that they worked it out—just when is such a teaching worked out anyway?—but the exaltation and Lordship of Christ over creation and over the Church are there. I mention four “systematics” works, widely used, as proof of this contention. They are Turretin,³² Heinrich Heppe who indeed defines Kingship in terms of the Church but nevertheless speaks of Christ's universal power and authority,³³ Charles Hodge who has a section on “Christ's Dominion Over the Universe” in the discussion of the kingly office,³⁴ and Dr. Abraham Kuyper who has a powerful section on Christ's kingship including many pages on his relation as king to the world outside the Church.³⁵ What is true of these best-known theological writers, I believe, is true of those not so well known. It can be affirmed then that Reformed theology has given serious attention to the doctrine of the Lordship of Christ. It has made much of that fact (1) personally—“I am not my own but belong unto my faithful Savior Jesus Christ,” (2)—ecclesiastically—Christ has always been de-

³¹*Op. cit.*, p. 24f.

³²II, IV, xvi.

³³XVIII, XXXIIff.

³⁴II, p. 599ff.

³⁵*Dict. Dogmatiek*, *Locus de Christo*, Caput V, 9.

clared the sole Head and King of the Church—and, (3) universally, or cosmically. Proof of his Lordship is his ascension and exaltation to the Father's right hand from which he exercises his sovereign rule.

It is our good fortune, however, to be living in a day when there has been a most remarkable new emphasis on this subject and mainly by scholars—to speak only of the science of theology—in the Reformed tradition. To mention one scholar, Professor Oscar Cullmann has emphasized this fact most effectively. I trust that all of you have or will become familiar with his *Christ and Time*. In other, untranslated, writings he works out the same theme on the Lordship of Jesus. In one of these, e.g., he shows that the early Church made much more of Christ's reign than we do today, the Apostle's Creed retaining the expression "sitteth on the right hand of God" out of a rich tradition concerning Christ's triumph over the evil powers and his subsequent exaltation. He shows further in this essay that there is no Old Testament passage cited so frequently in the New Testament as the first verse of Psalm 110: "Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool."³⁶

But, as we have already seen, Professor Cullmann is far from alone in his position. The General Secretary of the World Council of Churches made, as we have seen, "The Kingship of Christ" the theme of his Stone lectures at Princeton; Professors A. A. Van Ruler³⁷ and H. Berkhoff³⁸ of the Netherlands have done the same, and Dr. Niesel, in a typical statement of his own position which is that of the "Confessing Church" in Germany, writes: "Fundamental to the witness of the Reformed Churches is the confession that is brought to expression in Question 1 of the Heidelberg Catechism, 'that I with body and soul, both in life and in death, am not my own, but belong to my faithful Savior Jesus Christ.' Jesus Christ has once done something which has also brought me today under his dominion. He is not only a figure in the distant past, but a most living present reality. As Lord of Lords he directs an imperial reign of grace for his own. To him and his salvation-bestowing Lordship we are subject. Reformed theology calls us to remembrance of Easter and the Ascension and sees the cross of Christ in their light."³⁹

To close this part of our discussion with a practical question, I wonder how faithful we are to our theological heritage in this matter. I wonder how seriously our congregations, our people—how seriously *we*—hold this

³⁶ "Zur neuesten Diskussion ueber die Exousiae in Roem. 13:1," in *Theologische Zeitschrift*, Sept./Okt., 1954, p. 327. The N.T. passages cited are Rom. 8:34; I Cor. 15:25; Col. 3:1; Eph. 1:20; Heb. 1:3; 8:1; 10:13; I Pet. 3:22; Acts 2:34; 5:31; 7:55; Rev. 3:21; Matt. 22:44; 26:64; Mark 12:36; 14:62; 16:19; Luke 20:42; 22:69. References in the Apostolic Fathers are also cited.

³⁷ *Op. cit.*, and *Religie en Politiek*.

³⁸ *De Kerk en de Keizer*.

³⁹ *Das Evangelium und die Kirchen*, p. 148.

truth concerning the present, dynamic Lordship of him who was, who is and who is to come.

I wish to say *secondly* that the ascension is important to Reformed theology because that theology has been characterized by an appreciation for the gift of the Holy Spirit. John Calvin has been called the theologian of the Holy Spirit and Calvin's writings about the work of the Spirit are one of his richest gifts to the Church. Whence comes this gift of the Holy Spirit? The answer, obvious to every student of the Bible, is from the ascended Lord. We saw earlier that Jesus stated that a reason for his return to the Father was that he might send his Spirit to the Church. Ten days after the ascension, while the disciples were praying and waiting, the Spirit was received and the Church was empowered for its task. Pentecost was a unique phenomenon but the Spirit has not been withdrawn from the Church. He is still with us in all his preserving, in all his saving, in all his energizing, in all his charismatic activity. It is easy to forget these truths, grow weary with boredom and then just go on doing things in the same old way, expecting things *not* to happen.

Jesus said that he would not leave us but that he would continue with his disciples. "Lo, I am with you always . . . I will not leave you comfortless; I will come to you." Yet he has left us; but he has given us his Spirit and that Spirit is Christ with us, Christ in us, the hope of glory. Reformed theology, I say, has taken these truths comparatively seriously. It has been imperfect, just as have been all other attempts to build systems of thought, although such attempts are necessary if faith is to be intelligible, as is being shown frequently again in our day. But at this point, as in others, the Reformed Churches have caught truth from the Word of God.

In the last years we have been hearing much about Pentecostalism and Pentecostal Churches—and they have vigor indeed, and apparently God's blessing. Some folks, including Pentecostalists, believe that they alone understand the Scriptural teaching on the Holy Spirit. Some of them become extreme in their emphases, wander from the truth of the Word, but all the while feel sorry for the rest of us. I have recently had some lively correspondence from a woman like that. She was once a member of a Reformed Church but is now a Pentecostalist. She takes issue with something that I wrote and says, in part,

"I will not let you off so easily. I like your frankness; then we can get somewhere. The trouble in the lukewarm church groups in these last days of this dispensation is that there is too much pussyfooting which is greatly hindering the cause of Christ (2 Tim. 4:3, 4; Rev. 3:14-22) . . . I understand your difficulty, for it is only a few short years ago that I was as much in the dark as you are. First of all I will give my testimony. I was in the Reformed Church for about thirty-one years; there is where I was saved, but there was no growth in my spiritual life. We got very good spiritual preaching from the pulpit; Jesus was real from the pulpit, during most of these years. But as

soon as I'd take my eyes from the pulpit onto the congregation Jesus seemed to fade away. In other words, Jesus is not real to the individuals in the congregation. This was something I could not understand. I took my burden to the Lord, and my blessed Lord led me into a group where Jesus *is* real. I praise His wonderful name! He truly becomes sweeter as the days go by."

At the end of the long letter she writes, "I thank my lovely, precious Jesus for having given me an opportunity to witness to you, a man who is far above me in education and position. Please, Brother Osterhaven, seek the Lord on this matter; You will never be sorry. All my words are of no avail unless you seek the Lord, and when you have done so let me hear from you again and we shall take up the other matters mentioned in our correspondence."

There is undoubtedly much good in that lady's Christianity. She is fervent, frank and, as Paul might say, full of the Spirit. But whatever good there is in her understanding of the Christian faith has been in Reformed theology from the days of Calvin. I believe that some Pentecostalists would be greatly surprised if they would read certain chapters in the *Institutes* and passages in the *Commentaries*. But Calvin was but the beginning of that Biblical emphasis in the Reformed stream of thought. There was also John Owen and Abraham Kuyper, and today there is A. A. van Ruler who had probably made the finest attempt in our time to work out a thorough Biblical pneumatology.⁴⁰ And I do not believe that it was by chance that Puritanism and Methodism, with their interest in the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, came out of the Reformed Churches.

There is an interesting relationship of the three-fold office of Christ to his present, exalted ministry in our behalf. As he continues as our only priest, having brought his sacrifice to heaven and now interceding for us, and as he is our eternal king, so he is also our prophet. Through his Spirit he is teaching his Church, as he taught it during his earthly life by his voice, bringing all things to its remembrance, guiding it into all truth. He, the Spirit, does not speak from himself, but what things soever he hears, those he speaks. And he declares to us the things that are to come.⁴¹

Finally, I wish to relate the significance of the ascension to Reformed theology by stating that that theology has understood the ascension as precisely *that*, as Christ's removal of himself from one place, earth, to another place, heaven, whence he will come again. This, of course, was the point at issue between the Lutheran and the Reformed Churches in the sixteenth century and it continues a major point of difference today.

The doctrine of Luther and of strict Lutherans is that at the ascension there was a communication of attributes, more particularly that just Christ's divine attributes were imparted to his human nature. Thus his human nature could be ubiquitous, in more than one place at any one time. Accord-

⁴⁰ *Op. cit.*

⁴¹ John 14:25f.; 16:13f.

ing to some Lutherans, this communication of attributes took place at the birth of Christ, but during his earthly sojourn he emptied himself so that his divine power and glory were concealed. Other Lutheran scholars aver that the communication occurred at the time of Christ's exaltation only.

By this theory Luther sought to answer the question how Christ could be in heaven and also be corporeally present in the elements of the Lord's Supper. His ascension means, not that he left the earth and went to heaven where he now is, but that his human nature became ubiquitous and is still with us. The Church of all ages confesses that he "ascended into heaven, and sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty," but "the right hand of God is everywhere (ubique) and Christ in respect of his humanity, is truly and in very deed seated thereat."⁴² So spoke Luther and his followers and condemned the teaching "that Christ's body is so confined in heaven that it can in no mode whatever be likewise at one and the same time in many places, or in all the places where the Lord's Supper is celebrated."⁴³ Nor should the faithful, in the Lord's Supper, be exhorted "to lift their eyes to heaven, and there seek the body of Christ," but they are "to seek the body and blood of Christ in the Lord's Supper."⁴⁴ He is not absent from us corporeally—that is a Zwinglian error⁴⁵—but is today present with us in his whole being.

Strict Lutheran dogmatists have taken the same position. Their best known and most influential American spokesman was Francis Pieper, who has extensive discussions of the above topics in the second and third volumes of his *Christian Dogmatics*,⁴⁶ although the five pages on the ascension itself, much of it a factitious interpretation of Acts 3:21, are surprisingly, but understandably, brief. The determining consideration in his discussion is the doctrine of the corporeal presence of Christ in the Eucharist, and the interpretation of other Scriptural data, e.g., the ascension, is shaped accordingly. Some statements might strike initiated readers humorously, if the author were not so manifestly in earnest. An example is the straight-faced affirmation, given repeatedly, that "Luther does not 'interpret' the words of institution at all, but takes them as they read. The Roman and Reformed teachings, however, rest on extensive and copious 'interpretations' of the words of institution. . . . The Lutheran doctrine of the Lord's Supper rests on the bare words of institution, and not on added 'exegesis'."⁴⁷ How naive can learned men be? As though any doctrine or knowledge can be anything less than facts *plus their interpretation!*

⁴² *The Formula of Concord*, Art. VII, Affirmative, V.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, Art. VII, Negative, XI, Cf. XIII.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, Art. VII, Negative, XV.

⁴⁵ Francis Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, Vol. III, p. 348.

⁴⁶ II, 173-305; 324-330; III, 293-349.

⁴⁷ *Op. cit.*, pp. 337, 341.

From the first the Reformed Churches did not understand the ascension in that way. And so Calvin has numerous places,⁴⁸ and powerful arguments, where he states the local presence of Christ in heaven, a place removed from earth. The Heidelberg Catechism is as sharp and precise in its position on the local presence of Christ in his state of exaltation in heaven, and the reason for those four questions on the ascension, an unusual number, is the controversy in the Palatinate about the presence of Christ in the Supper at the time the catechism was written.

Other Reformed creedal statements⁴⁹ and Reformed theologians have been equally unequivocal in the position they have taken and have, I believe, been closer to the truth as it has been given the Church. There is much that could be said, but it may be sufficient here to say that the Lutheran position has far-reaching implications for many doctrines, among them not only the ascension and the Lord's Supper, but also Christ's present reign—God's right hand, they say, is everywhere; the Second Coming, interpreted by them as a sudden manifestation of that Christ who has been *corporeally* in our midst all the time; and also the incarnation—as Dr. Niesel asks in this connection: "What precisely is the significance of the incarnation of the Son of God?" And he reminds us that this question is especially pressing because Luther claimed that during his earthly walk Christ's body was everywhere present!⁵⁰

Reformed theology has believed that as Christ came forth from the Father, so he has returned to him. From there he rules the nations and sends the Church his Holy Spirit. Some day he will come again, and that second advent will be an event the dramatic proportions of which will be greater than creation itself. He will come from heaven. *Where* it is we do not know, but we know *that* it is. It is the place that he has prepared for his people. It is the place where he is now with the angels. It is the place of the special manifestation of God's presence.

⁴⁸ *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, II, xvi, xiv; IV, xvii, ix, xviii, xix, xxiv, xxvi, xxvii, xxviii, xxix, xxx; *Mutual Consent in Regard to the Sacraments between the Ministers of the Church of Zurich and John Calvin, Minister of the Church of Geneva; Second Defence of the Pious and Orthodox Faith Concerning the Sacraments in answer to the Calumnies of Joachim Westphal*; both in Calvin's Tracts, vol. II.; *et Comm.*, ascension texts *supra*.

⁴⁹ Vid. P. Schaff, *Creeds of Christendom*, vol. III, articles on the Ascension and the Lord's Supper.

⁵⁰ *Op. cit.*, p. 225.

THE REFORMED FAITH AND AMERICAN CULTURE

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We are at a point of uncomfortable disadvantage, in this paper, of being unable to define with any precisionness the two rather large realities about whose interrelationships and interplay we are attempting to speak. To take "American Culture," the second of these terms, first, can this be anything less than the totality of things American?

And yet, simply to make up a list of features which have characterized American history, and to call the sum of these things "American Culture," would be somewhat like totaling up all the discrete elements of the human body, every last cell and bone accounted for, and calling the result a person. In the latter case, that which is spirit, that which gives this particular grouping of physical detail the right to be called "person" is precisely the indefinable something which cannot be fitted into the list, and yet without which there is no person. So with American Culture. The very element which unites the myriad details of America's historical existence into the cultural form we call American is always somewhere just beyond our grasp, but without it there is neither cohesive unity nor significant meaning. The understanding of this fact should help us to keep from converting a complex truth into a simple falsehood by being over-anxious about a precise definition of the term. We shall take American Culture to be the whole confusing complex of events, ideas, ideals, dreams and visions, triumphs and failures, which has made American history to be what it has been from colonial times to the present. And we are not suggesting that the Reformed Faith simply stepped into this milieu, for American Culture is, in substantial part, a product of the Reformed Faith, with its many and varied expressions, coming into fruitful interplay with a multitude of diverse historical currents and forces.

To make such a contention requires that we define the other term, "Reformed Faith," in the broadest manner possible. Such a definition will be inclusive of not only the theological and confessional denotations of the



term, but of all the political, social, and economic ramifications associated with the word "Reformed" on the American continent. In two recent books, *Democracy and the Churches* by Prof. James H. Nichols, and *Foundation of American Freedom* by A. M. Davies, this very broad usage of the term "Reformed" is made. In its inclusiveness, it is clearly something more, and often something quite other, than either a strict usage of the term "Calvinistic" will allow, or any kind of theological definitiveness will suffer. It should perhaps be noted that this comprehensive usage of the term is by no means confined to the authors just mentioned, but has had, rather, a very wide currency for some time. We are speaking here not only of the specific term "Reformed Faith," but of it and other terms which are roughly equivalent to it. The word "Puritan" has, without question, at least in this country, a considerably wider usage than such expressions as "Reformed Faith," or "Calvinistic." And though a significant body of scholarly opinion today would deny that "Puritan" on the one hand, and "Reformed" or "Calvinistic" on the other, are in any real sense equivalents, they are, nevertheless, from an historical and sociological point of view, of the same religious family. It would not be unfair to say that principles and ideas stemming from John Calvin, not in the sense of having been originated by him, but rather articulated by him in a peculiar form, have had a larger constructive power in the forming of American Culture than any other single influence.

If there were only two general types of Calvinism before us, the broad, cultural form just mentioned, and the strictly theological and confessional type, our problem would be greatly simplified. Might not one choose one or the other and discuss its relation to American Culture? A. M. Davies does exactly this in his book, contending that sufficient severance has taken place between the original Calvinistic theological ideas and the resultant social and political ideals, and that the modern man, even as a member of a Reformed community, may safely reject the former and praise God for the latter. This is not at all to the liking of Prof. John H. Gerstner, who, in a review of the volume in the *Christian Century* (Dec. 7, 1955) comments: "This is a good book while it gathers the golden eggs and a bad book when it then kills the goose that laid them." Many attempts have also been made in books, sermons, and addresses to support the other thesis, that confessional Calvinism has made a significant contribution to the formation of American Culture, and that, as Prof. Gerstner implies, no real disjunction must be allowed between the formative power of the theological idea and the resultant cultural creation.

There is, however, a third kind of Calvinism claiming a right to speak in our time, one which lies, like the orthodox Calvinistic type, clearly in the religious or theological field, but which is a kind of mortal foe of orthodox Calvinists. It has no very definite structure, it has created no systematic theology, and it assumes many quite different titles. It eschews

any confining use of the terms "Calvinistic" or "Reformed," and yet it demands for itself the whole heritage of the Reformed as its own legitimate possession. Its fundamental view is both historical and progressivistic in the sense that the dominant principles and ideals which have actually characterized the empirical history of the Reformed churches the last four centuries are the peculiarly Reformed features which may be used today to identify that which follows in its train. From this viewpoint, no special theological idea may be used as a criterion to distinguish between Reformed and non-Reformed. For example, where a particular view of predestination might once have been employed to distinguish a Calvinist from an Arminian, from this broad theological perspective a whole denomination or group of denominations may be Arminian in their conceptions of sin and grace and still be Reformed because they are, from an historical point of view, in the Reformed tradition, and because they have been conditioned by, and are expressive of, the ideology which is peculiarly Reformed. As Dean Sperry once put it, ". . . the permanent and still most important influence of Calvinism on American life is to be sought and found not in its theology, but in its cultural conception of the relation of religion to life. At this point even those churches which are now theologically emancipated remain Calvinistic."¹ This same opinion was expressed by Prof. Wilhelm Pauck in an article on "The Prospects of Orthodoxy" in *The Journal of Religion* (January, 1947, pp. 49-50). He notes that the nature of Calvinism may be described with special emphasis on its "God-centered faith," "for the doctrines of the sovereignty of God and of divine predestination and providence have always been of special concern to all Calvinists." He underlines, also, "The Reformed insistence on the understanding of religion as obedience to the divine law. For from this special conceptions of the nature of Christian ethics and particularly of church order and polity have been derived. Indeed the organization of the church which Calvin prescribed in terms of his reading of the biblical law represents to this day the one feature which all Calvinist bodies have in common and by virtue of which they constitute a special church family." Churchmanship, much more than theology, has held the central place in Calvinism, and in this respect it differs from Lutheranism, which is anchored primarily in a theological tradition. Calvinism has not neglected theology, but "conformity with creedal and theological orthodoxy can hardly be regarded as the most important feature of Calvinism."

Pauck makes an important point when he says there are many Calvinist theological traditions. He finds the Reformed theologies of the Swiss, the Germans, the French, the Dutch, the Scotch, etc., "are not so uniform as the theologies of the various Lutheran bodies are." He would include the Arminians with the Reformed, just as definitely as the "Fathers of Dort." Jonathan Edwards and Abraham Kuyper are equally Calvinistic, though there are significant differences between their theological views. And so

Barth and Brunner today, along with J. Gresham Machen, stand firmly in the Calvinistic tradition. Dr. Pauck expresses high regard for the Calvinistic theologians and "system-builders" of the past, but "today Christian theological thinking can no longer be cast in this mold, simply because the modern philosophical, natural, and social sciences forbid it. It is nothing but obscurantism to base the defense of the truth of the Christian faith upon norms containing philosophical and social implications which are irreconcilable with the evidences of the modern knowledge of the world. This denial of the adequacy of orthodoxy does not mean that the anti-supernaturalistic scientific world-view and the historical conception of life stand in irreconcilable conflict with the Christian religion, as the spokesmen of orthodox churches are wont to claim. They merely render impossible the preservation of theological ways of thinking which were practiced before the rise of modern science and history."

Prof. John T. McNeill, in his recent work, *The History and Character of Calvinism*, also finds it unnecessary to identify theological Calvinism with a special kind of orthodox theology. He finds its center, rather, in a type of piety, one not identified with peculiar words and rites of worship. "It is characterized by a combination of God-consciousness with an urgent sense of mission. The triune God, Sovereign Creator, Redeemer, and Comforter, is an ever-present reality through both prosperity and disaster. Guilt is real, but it is submerged under grace" (p. 436). Further, "The Calvinist may not know how it happens; he may be a very simple-minded theologian; but he is conscious that God commands his will and deed as well as his thought and prayer. This is what makes him a reformer and a dangerous character to encounter on moral and political issues. He is a man with a mission to bring to realization the will of God in human society" (pp. 436-37). He is distrustful of idealistic utterances and professions, just because he knows the human heart to be desperately wicked. He is, for the same reason, cautious of taking up "causes." "Yet when he knows what is God's will, and how it is to be translated into action of the hour, he will espouse it with courage, energy, and tenacity. God has not given him the spirit of fear Calvinists . . . have often been troublers of Israel, assailants of the evils countenanced by the majority. We might almost say that this has been their trade and that when we find them acquiescent in a bad society they have given up working" (p. 437).

Orthodox, confessional Calvinism has, of course, a very different view of what constitutes genuine Calvinism. For it the term "Reformed Faith" designates a rather specific body of theological propositions, and only those accepting these propositions, or something very nearly like them, deserve the name of Calvinist. They not only accept for themselves all the fine things Pauck and McNeill associate with the name of Calvin, but they also make it quite clear that the broader variety of theological Calvinism

is not really Calvinism at all. Actually it is fraud and betrayal, for like the cultural type of Calvinism we spoke of first, this broad kind of Calvinism despises its origins. It is most interesting, in the light of these facts, that orthodox Calvinism, which in this country at the present time can boast so small a following, is repeatedly claiming that a "Calvinistic revival" is taking place, when actually every perceptible revival feature is occurring in the much larger movements of the broader Calvinists. Barth, for example, is blasted as a Kantian wolf masquerading as a Calvinist sheep, but the voluntary results of his dynamic ideas in the religious world are accepted as evidences of a return to Calvin. This much is certain, there is no significant return in our times to the basic and required theological structure of orthodox Calvinism, though there is a return to the very realistic views of man, in his nature and destiny, that characterized primitive Calvinism, yes, Calvin himself.

II

Thus far we have been trying to identify and define three general kinds of Calvinism on the American scene. For purposes of convenience, we shall refer to them hereafter as cultural Calvinism, broad Calvinism, and orthodox Calvinism. We have noted that the first, cultural Calvinism, is not too much concerned about the other two. Broad Calvinism accepts the fruits of cultural Calvinism and bemoans the anachronistic character of orthodox theology, wishing that it had given up long ago. Orthodox Calvinism likewise accepts the fruits of cultural Calvinism and denies that the second type is Calvinism at all. We shall now attempt to relate these three types of Calvinism to American Culture and to one another, not in the narrow sense of trying to discover what each contributed to make America what she is. That would apply almost exclusively to the first type, and, as we noted before, American Culture is in good part derived from the cultural aspects of Calvinism. Rather, we are seeking to estimate the fortunes, good and bad, of Calvinism in the American environment. We are really asking two questions here: What was Calvinism able to contribute to the formation of American Culture? and What happened to Calvinism in the historical process we call American history?

Puritan Protestantism had Calvinism as its most basic component, but just because there were other significant elements in the admixture, Puritanism can not be regarded as being Calvinism pure and simple. Nichols calls it "neo-Calvinism," and finds it a fusion of Calvinism, Spiritualism, and the Baptist sect movement.² He contrasts it with the aristocratic and authoritarian Calvinism of the sixteenth century. New England Puritanism operated from a Calvinistic creedal basis, at least through the 17th cen-

¹ Sperry, W., *Religion in America*, pp. 145f.

² Nichols, J. H., *Democracy and the Churches*, p. 10.

tury. In 1648 the Cambridge Platform was adopted by a Massachusetts synod. It sanctioned the Westminster Confession "for the substance thereof." The Savoy Confession, adopted by the English Congregationalists in 1658, was essentially the same in doctrine as the Westminster creed. It was adopted, with slight changes, by the Boston Synod of 1680, and this in turn was approved by the Saybrook Synod in Connecticut in 1708.

The religion of the New England Puritans was certainly not strictly Calvinistic at every point, in spite of the Calvinistic theological framework within which it moved. By this we mean that there were significant departures from first and second generation Calvinism in Geneva, both theologically and with respect to polity. However, since the world has never really known for any considerable period any other kind of Calvinism than "modified Calvinism," this fact should not lead us to disavow New England religion for the Reformed Faith. Accepting the core as Reformed, the fruitful question will refer to the extent and nature of the modification. The intellectual cast of New England theology and philosophy was clearly Ramian, from Peter Ramus and from the English Puritan divines who espoused his methodology. A scholastic form of the federal theology of the covenant, derived from Cocceius and English federalists, was also assumed as the normative explanation of the relationship between God and his people. Students of the period have found this covenant idea put the whole dealing of God and man on a very legalistic basis, much more so than primitive Calvinism would have been able to countenance. And Calvin himself would hardly be able to approve the oligarchical form of government in the Massachusetts Bay Colony, with its insistence upon the "elect" only having the right to vote and hold office. This demand had developed along with the Puritan dissenters' insistence that it was possible to distinguish accurately between the elect and the non-elect. Calvin was not so sure. Like Calvin, on the other hand, the New Englanders stood for a Bible commonwealth. The Scriptures were all-sufficient and the final authority in all matters of faith and life. They often used the Bible as a code or law book for purely civil affairs.

It can not be our purpose here, in so brief an essay, to identify the Reformed element in each of the colonial communities. Certain generalizations will have to stand for the whole early period of the development of an American culture, especially with respect to the growth of political norms of a democratic nature. Of this Nichols says, "For a century and a half, . . . from 1640 to 1790, only one Christian tradition, that of Anglo-American Puritanism and Nonconformity, had nurtured a mature democratic political ethic. This orientation stood out in sharp contrast to the traditionalist authoritarianism of High Church Anglicanism and early Methodism, the conservative patriarchalism of German Lutheranism, and the divine right absolutism of Roman Catholicism" (p. 41). We shall have to confine ourselves to a listing of some of the significant ingredients

of the American political ethic which, though modified by Puritanism, were nevertheless peculiarly Calvinistic:

- (1) The principle of separation of church and state. Though the 17th century Puritan society in New England was anti-democratic, by the end of that century serious modifications in the direction of democracy were taking place, making for a clearer differentiation of the functions of state and church. Roger Williams had been more truly Calvinistic at this point than John Cotton. Calvin in Geneva had insisted upon the right of the church to make her own decisions in some matters, especially with respect to the discipline of the membership.
- (2) The principle of pulpit freedom. Here Calvin had demanded the untrammelled privilege for the preacher of declaring with authority the Word of God, even in criticism of kings and magistrates. Puritan preachers did much in defense of the liberties of the people through the sermon. It was a safeguard against the despot's use of the "divine-right" theory. The pulpit kept reminding the throne that no human being could exercise absolute power. That belonged to God alone, and all men, including kings, were subject to His law. As J. W. Thornton put it, in *The Pulpit of the American Revolution* (p. xix): "To the pulpit, the Puritan pulpit, we owe the moral force which won our independence."³ Natural corollaries to follow were freedom of speech and press.
- (3) Rulers rule by the consent of the governed. The basis of this is to be found in the presbyterian form of church government espoused by Calvin. Ministers are elected by the church membership. Laymen serve as elders on an equal basis with the clergy. "Thus," says Davies, "the great principle that a government derives its just powers from the consent of the governed was firmly implanted in the heart of Calvinism from its very birth. By natural and direct descent it became, first, the guiding principle of English Puritan thought and, then, in the fullness of time, the idea that sparked the American Revolution" (p. 60).
- (4) Right of rebellion against civil powers. This was by inferior magistrates representing the people. Later this right was exercised by elective parliaments.
- (5) Right of private judgment. This right had been inculcated by Calvin's doctrine of the correlation of Word and Spirit. The Holy Spirit's internal witness in the human heart was the final arbiter for all religious judgments. Later, the guidance of the Spirit became isolated, for many, from the Word, and became a kind of voice of conscience, an internal decision which could not be gainsaid. This principle was highly significant in the development of American culture. In the development of governmental forms on the democratic ideal, government by debate and discussion became imperative, with every participant speaking out of personal conviction. Thus comes what Nichols calls "new truth through the group."

There are doubtless other important factors of a Calvinistic type which played upon American Culture in the formative years of our history, but these will suffice to indicate how significant Reformed principles were. There were principles of a somewhat different kind, too, which aided in the development of a culture which is basically Protestant, and more than

³ Cited in Davies, *op. cit.*, p. 46.

that, peculiarly Calvinistic. Dr. Paul Tillich calls the American ethical point of view a "secularized Puritan ethic." Its original orientation was religious, and deeply so, just as our hospitals and institutions of mercy were also originally religious. But just as the latter fell into secular hands, so the American ethic has become the generalized ethical mood and mind of the great majority of the American people. The majority of schools and colleges in early America were founded under Calvinistic auspices, directly or indirectly, and these, too, have for the most part become "secularized." By that term we do not mean "non-religious," but rather the religious and the purely civil becoming so nearly united, the specifically religious quality, or at least the ecclesiastical, is completely submerged by the civil, the religious remaining only as a very vague, indefinable something. To speak of America as a "Christian nation" is to do so only in this same vague manner.

Theological or confessional Calvinism passed through many vicissitudes from colonial times to the present. New England Puritanism was hardly a half-century old when the old Calvinism was beginning to become seriously undermined. The acceptance of the half-way covenant in the second half of the seventeenth century in most of New England was one of the more significant elements in this story of decline. Where Calvin, the Calvinistic creeds, and most of the older Calvinists had insisted that the baptized children of Christian parents could be *presumed* to be regenerated, by virtue of their membership in the household of faith (not by virtue of the baptismal act), the half-way covenant allowed baptism of infants in cases in which the genuine faith of the parents was in serious doubt. Calvin's view was quite essential to his conception of the covenantal relation, for by this view children of Christian parents could be regarded as the children of God and could be nurtured as such. This profound meaning was lost by the half-way covenant, for in the case of the latter, the child's place in the covenant was tenuous indeed. It was not a far step from this to the notion that children, all children, were to be regarded as being in Satan's hands until evidences of conversion could be displayed. This occurred throughout the great period of American revivalism, from the days of Jonathan Edwards through the first half of the 19th century. This view is still held by quite a few denominations. At times children from Christian homes were tortured almost beyond belief by reflections of the terrors of hell, from which they scarcely believed they would escape.

"Stoddardeanism" or the employment of the sacraments of the church as converting ordinances, begun by the Rev. Solomon Stoddard and accepted by many others, contributed its share to the decline. Sacraments became means to an end, a dubious end, and thus lost something of their former dignity and religious depth. In the colonial period earnest discussions were

held as to the division of the covenant into an external covenant and an internal covenant, an arrangement which opened the way for a less-than-strict view of church membership, since even the unconverted might share the full blessings of the church along with the sincere. Other factors involving a wholly new outlook on life and reality were creeping in. After Jonathan Edwards the battle against an anthropocentric moralism steadily became more and more ineffectual, even though the mighty warriors who followed in the train of Jonathan Edwards fought valiantly. The typical Calvinism of the old school was so theocentric that some were willing to declare that they were quite willing to descend into hell upon death, if so the greater glory of God were achieved. But the growing mood in the 18th century was for individualism, moralism, and with them the placing of man at the center of his universe. The comfort of man, the happiness of man, the conviction that man was essentially good, was the regnant opinion, and by and by the New England theology (by the beginning of the 19th century) was saying with conviction what would have horrified Jonathan Edwards. The New Haven Divinity under Taylor and others was calling itself Calvinistic, and was quite Arminian, perhaps somewhat Pelagian. What took place here became a commonplace by the close of the 19th century. At the opening of the 20th century, the Presbyterian Church, U. S. A., once the very stronghold of Calvinistic orthodoxy under Hodge and Warfield, had become, practically and creedally, Arminian. The old Calvinism can be found today in a few minority groups, like the Christian Reformed Church, the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, in some areas of the Reformed Church in America, and here and there.

When we say that the "old Calvinism" can be found occasionally today, we are speaking, of course, of a modified form of original Calvinism. After the first generation or so in Geneva, this is the only kind which has appeared. And most of these types of Calvinism, in this country and abroad, have been considerably more rationalistic, abstract, and non-existential than the original. Nevertheless, the core has been true enough to the original to warrant calling the whole Calvinistic, or Reformed. That which survives in American culture today as "old Calvinism" is rather completely out-of-step with the dominant cultural forces in the American scene. It has never come to proper terms with any school of philosophy, and it is "pre-scientific" in its rejection of the basic presuppositions underlying the contemporary view of reality. It clings to a more or less literalistic biblical view of reality, at cost of, say the critics, a genuine *sacrificium intellectus*. That means that reality is peopled with demons and angels, as well as with the human species. History will come to dramatic end; the time process will spend itself, and Christ will appear physically and visibly to consummate all things. The Bible is the trusted revelation of all this. The question of truth is not raised to the Bible; the Calvinist accepts it as truth because it is biblical. God is sovereign Creator and Redeemer; to

him must all glory go. Man is but the humble servant of the Almighty. And these are but a few of the many truths by which the Calvinist stands. There is a peculiar view of sin and grace, of each of the sacraments, of the relation between the two natures of Christ, and many others. Most members of so-called Calvinistic churches today have little or no knowledge or understanding of what these things are about. It is a fair question to ask whether "old Calvinism" can ever be revived in the midst of a cultural conditioning which militates at every point against an understanding of reality in the centuries-old framework just indicated. It can be said fairly that the greater part of the laity of Calvinistic churches is not even interested in such a revival, and it is a question whether the greater part of the clergy is any more concerned.

We may close on a speculative note and ask whether there is any possibility of a real revival of confessional Calvinism, even though there is nothing at the present time to indicate its probability. In essence this is asking whether it is possible to create, or for there to be created, a dynamic force in a cultural matrix which is basically inimical to it. It must be affirmed, first of all, that genuine revival is not dependent upon a sizable body of participants, though there would be likely more than in a non-revivalistic phase. Thus revival of confessional Calvinism might take place only within the bounds of churches claiming to be of Calvinistic origin or spirit, even though the total number of persons or churches involved would represent only a small minority of the religious forces in contemporary American culture. The conditions of such revivalism would, perhaps, be too strenuous for the typical American today. A strong-mindedness and a stout-heartedness that characterized the old Calvinist is hardly to be found anywhere today. Submission to doctrinal preaching and to regular catechizing are likewise the *rara avis* in our times, and yet one can hardly imagine a revival of old Calvinism apart from careful and regular instruction in the specific theological ideas which ruled minds and hearts for several centuries. But the alternatives are "broad Calvinism," which is Calvinism in spirit but not in body, or "cultural Calvinism," which is not religion at all, but a curious mixture of an old idea giving its substance to a much later need.

This much is also true. It will not be possible to go scouring among the Calvinisms of the past, whether that of Jonathan Edwards, or of Abraham Kuyper, or of Charles Hodge, or of any other, and select one of them to become the Calvinism of our generation. With all their excellences, they were all laden with faults, the chief one being a proneness to cast biblical theology into an abstract, metaphysical framework. Calvinism in our times must be much more thoroughly biblical, and like Calvin himself, much more existential. Where comprehensive unities in theological thought can not be secured, both because of the non-philosophic character of the biblical revelation, and because of our finite inability to pierce the divine mys-

teries, we must bow both mind and heart before him who made us, in reverence and praise. Neither can contemporary Calvinism afford to cultivate its own little self-satisfied groups; it must in our times take its precious insights into the meaning of God's revelation into the great ecumenical discussion. Its truth must not be allowed to become the divisive thing it has often been in the past, but a gracious, helping, and healing thing for all peoples.

